

Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr John Hyde; Mr Paul Papalia; Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Bill Johnston; Dr Janet Woollard; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Fran Logan; Mr Ian Blayney

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE — PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS PRECEDENCE

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion

MR R.F. JOHNSON (Hillarys — Leader of the House) [12.12 pm]: I move —

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as is necessary to enable private members' business to have priority from 4.00 pm to 8.00 pm on Wednesday, 21 September 2011.

I was reluctant to move this motion. At different times in the past two or three sitting weeks, I have given notice that I would move this motion. It is my job to try to ensure that a reasonable amount of business is conducted in this house so that it can flow on to the upper house. It seems that things have changed over the years. In times gone by, until fairly recently, business certainly seemed to go through this house a lot more quickly than in the upper house. There were fewer speakers on particular bills in the house in days gone by, and a lot of time was spent on those same bills in the other place. That seems to have changed completely now. It seems that everyone wants to speak on a bill in this house, and it can take hours, days, and sometimes weeks to get a bill through this place.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, I have given the call to the Leader of the House; I have not given it to anybody else. I am presuming that the manager of opposition business may also want to make comment. If you want to make comment, member for Warnbro, I ask you to seek the call.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I am simply trying to explain what has changed over the last a couple of years or so; that is, that bills are taking a lot longer to go through this house. When bills go to the other place, they are dispensed with sometimes within half an hour or an hour. That is not what happened over many, many years. Obviously, as it is essential that we get some business from this house to the other house, we have to sit late sometimes. That is why we had to sit late last night. It is not something I look forward to doing. I do not think that anybody in this house enjoys sitting late, but it is my responsibility to ensure that the government gets an adequate amount of its business through this house so that bills can go to the other house and be dealt with there. It is up to the upper house to decide how long it wants to spend on bills, but it seems to be spending far, far less time on bills than it has ever done in the past. In the old days, the upper house would sit one or two weeks after us at the end of the year, but chances are that that will not happen this year because it seems to be dispensing with bills very quickly. Sitting late is not something that I enjoy doing, but some bills need to go from this house to the other house this week. I think the only way that will happen is if we sit a bit later tonight. I do not intend to keep the house too late. I always try to avoid sitting late on a Thursday. I know that members, particularly country members, need to get back to their electorates.

I seek cooperation from the manager of opposition business and his members so that when we get up and speak to the bills, we actually speak to the bills and not just use it as an opportunity to talk about extraneous things.

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham) [12.15 pm]: I want to speak to this motion. So that government members understand, this motion is to allow a dinner break this evening so that this house will be able to sit later into the evening. This will break up the parliamentary sitting day so that we have a break from 6.00 pm to 7.00 pm, and we will probably be here to some late hour this evening. Last night, we were here after midnight; it was 12.30 am before people headed home. The member for Mandurah lives more than an hour away, so he would not have got home until in the vicinity of quarter to two. We were here last night to debate the Cat Bill. People might laugh at the Cat Bill, but the Cat Bill is quite controversial and many people have an interest in it. Some provisions in the Cat Bill are quite authoritarian and needed some examination.

To put in perspective the Leader of the House's attack just then, 12 amendments to the Cat Bill were moved by the Minister for Local Government. We stayed late last night because we had to debate 12 amendments that the government put on the notice paper to its own legislation. The Leader of the House attacks us and says that we have kept him late and delayed the legislation. Why did the government move 12 amendments to the bill? The first government business order of the day today is the Commercial Arbitration Bill 2011. Guess who has put amendments on the notice paper? The government has. Here I have a page of amendments from the Attorney General.

Mr C.C. Porter: There are only two!

Mr M. McGOWAN: I understand that the Attorney General is new and he might not understand the processes too well, but that bill will be delayed because of government amendments, not ours. All I am saying to the government is that if it cannot have its legislation drafted properly before it is brought in here, it should not blame us if there is a delay when government members move amendments on the floor. If we debate authoritarian legislation that will provide greater powers to council workers to investigate cat mishaps than it

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 21 September 2011]

p7453b-7461a

Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr John Hyde; Mr Paul Papalia; Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Bill Johnston; Dr Janet Woollard; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Fran Logan; Mr Ian Blayney

provides to police, so be it. If we debate the government's authoritarian legislation and make points on it, so be it.

This brings into focus the mismanagement of the house. I want to let members know about something going on today. At four o'clock this afternoon, we will debate a motion to do with education. We provided notice to the government yesterday, as required. The member for Mandurah gave notice that he would move a motion to deal with 17 teachers in his constituency who are losing their positions at North Mandurah Primary School.

A government member interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Please let me finish; members will enjoy this. The motion also referred to the disorganisation of district offices. We put that notice of motion on the notice paper yesterday and provided notice to the government. People planned to come to the government this afternoon. Yesterday afternoon, the Leader of the House came to us and said, "The Minister for Education may not be here. We do not know." This morning I received advice from the member for Mandurah that the minister will not be here this afternoon because she is unwell. I accepted that at face value until I received an email a moment ago with a press release put out today by the Minister for Education. If she is unwell, why is she putting out press releases and why is she available to the media for commentary, yet she cannot come into the house to answer questions? Why is that? What sort of management is that? The Leader of the House should be embarrassed that his minister is putting out press releases about the West Coast Eagles and education and so forth and she is available for comment. She can do the media, but she cannot come into this house and answer questions on behalf of 17 teachers who are losing their positions. What sort of management of the house is that? I do not blame the Leader of the House; I blame her. The Leader of the House is just doing what he is told, and he would not have even known about that. It is embarrassing for the Leader of the House that he allows that sort of flippant treatment of the house and of the procedures in this place and the opportunity for us to ask questions of the government.

We now have to completely reorganise what we are doing this afternoon in private members' business because of the minister not being here. She is totally capable of putting out a press release and being available for comment to the media this morning, but she cannot come into this place and answer the questions.

Dr G.G. Jacobs: If you were unwell, we would understand that.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Did the member hear anything I just said? I do understand people being unwell. When I was a minister in this place, I went and saw the member for Eyre once because I was unwell, and he was good. He gave me some good assistance. I was in a very uncomfortable position, and the member for Eyre was very helpful to me when I was a minister, and I appreciated that. All I am saying is that if a member is unwell, that is fine; and if a member cannot be here, that is fine. I fully understand and support that, and I said that. But then when I see press releases from the minister, I just say that I find it hard to believe that ministers can put out press releases when they are sick.

Dr G.G. Jacobs: She might have prepared that yesterday.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Member for Rockingham, the Minister for Education is unwell. The press release may well have gone out, but I can tell you that I went and deputised for her at that event this morning. She was not there; she was not well enough to be there.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The contact point on the release is the Minister for Education's office. So all I am saying to —

Mr C.J. Barnett: I took the place of the Minister for Education.

Mr M. McGOWAN: No, hold on. Does the Premier understand anything about his press releases? Just so that the Premier understands, ministers do not put their mobile phone number in their press releases; they put their ministerial office's phone number in their press releases. All ministers would do it. All I am saying to the Premier is that if that is his reasoning, surely —

Mr C.J. Barnett: It was an education announcement. The Minister for Education was unable to be there, so last night I agreed I would do it for her. She was unable to be there this morning because she is not well enough. That is why I did it, and I was there with the Minister for Sport and Recreation.

Mr J.N. Hyde: Your name should have been on the press release.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Oh, give us a break! Who cares about that?

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr M. McGOWAN: In any event, can the Premier see my point about the management of the place?

Mr C.J. Barnett: No, I can't; I cannot at all.

Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr John Hyde; Mr Paul Papalia; Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Bill Johnston; Dr Janet Woollard; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Fran Logan; Mr Ian Blayney

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Premier has not listened to the debate, so I will go over it with him again.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I was listening.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Premier came in here and intervened when he had not been listening to the debate. Last night the house sat until 12.30 in the morning.

Mr C.J. Barnett: It's actually a joint release.

Mr M. McGOWAN: With the Minister for Education's number on the bottom—with the Minister for Education quoted in the press release. All I am saying is that I do not object to the minister being sick, but I find it a little bit unusual if she puts out a press release on the same day. The Premier can make his excuses, but I find it unusual.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You are pathetic, absolutely pathetic, on this. The next time you come to us and tell us that one of your members has some little personal issue, which we have already accommodated, we'll remind you of this. The minister is not well.

The SPEAKER: We have a motion in front of the house moved by the Leader of the House. I have given you the opportunity to speak to it, member for Rockingham. I do not want to hear from anybody else; I do want to hear from the member for Rockingham.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Just so that members understand—because sometimes the Premier can be very ungracious —

Mr C.J. Barnett: To you?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I raised the point because I do not think the Premier listened to the process that we went through. All I know is that I was advised that the minister was unwell, and then I saw that a press release had gone out. That is why I raised the issue. Then the Premier was so ungracious as to raise little personal issues —

Mr C.J. Barnett: Which you raise frequently.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes, once, to do with one of our members being very pregnant, and the Premier says that it is a little personal issue. She was very pregnant, and the Premier knows the circumstances surrounding that. If the Premier wants to be so ungracious as to raise it in that context—I will not raise the ones that he raised with me—all I am saying to the Premier is that those are private conversations, and the Premier should not come in here and go on in the way that he has. And this is not the first time; it is not the only time he has done it.

In any event, the point I was making earlier is that we are sitting late tonight because of the government's amendments to the government's legislation—the same thing that delayed the house last night. The government moved 12 amendments to its own legislation, and that is the point I was making. We are now having more amendments to the first bill on the notice paper. All I am saying is that the management of the house is the Leader of the House's responsibility. If he wants to keep us late, he should not launch attacks on us for delaying the legislation when it is the Leader of the House's responsibility and it is government legislation that must have amendments to it moved by the government. It is a fair and reasonable —

Mr R.F. Johnson: Member, when did I attack you?

Mr M. McGOWAN: In the Leader of the House's speech just a moment ago, he talked about filibustering and wasting of time.

Mr R.F. Johnson: I never said that at all.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes, you did.

Mr R.F. Johnson: No, no; you read it.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes, you did. That is exactly what you did.

Mr R.F. Johnson: I explained to you the difference between this house and that house. In days gone by —

Mr M.P. Whitely: You're engaging in a debate.

Mr R.F. Johnson: I'm talking to him, not you. In days gone by, until this year, bills used to go through this house much —

Mr M.P. Whitely interjected.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Oh, be quiet!

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 21 September 2011]

p7453b-7461a

Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr John Hyde; Mr Paul Papalia; Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Bill Johnston; Dr Janet Woollard; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Fran Logan; Mr Ian Blayney

The SPEAKER: The member for Rockingham is responding to the motion before the house. I say to you again, members, that the member on his feet has the call; nobody else has the call.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The minister was interjecting.

Mr R.F. Johnson: What I actually said was that until this year, bills went through this house quicker, and then the upper house spent much more time on them. That has been reversed. Now we spend an endless amount of time on bills in this house, and they —

Several members interjected.

Mr R.F. Johnson: I'm talking to the manager of opposition business. Now what happens is that a bill that took hours, days and weeks here goes through the upper house in no time. That is all changed from what it used to be. So it's my job to make sure that we get business through the house and get it to the other house. That's what I said. I didn't criticise any of your members for filibustering. They were your words, not mine.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think the Leader of the House was just presenting an argument, Premier, that we are a good opposition at debating legislation. I think that is what he was saying.

Mr R.F. Johnson: You can take it whichever way you like, but don't put words in my mouth.

Mr M. McGOWAN: As I recall, when the Premier was on the back bench in the last term, the opposition was not exactly good at debating legislation. When the Premier took his bat and ball and went home, as he will recall, there was not a great deal of debate of legislation in this place. But that is our role, and we will debate legislation. As I was saying to the house before, the cat legislation, as amusing as it was, had some seriously authoritarian points in it, and we raised them. That is our role in this place, and we will continue to do that.

MR J.N. HYDE (Perth) [12.26 pm]: I also wish to address this issue so that the leader of government business is aware of the impact of these late decisions and this constant changing. Yesterday when I gave notice of a motion about concrete batching plants, I had to give my word to the Minister for Planning that I did not intend that we would debate it today. Now, because we have had this change by the government with the education motion —

Mr R.F. Johnson: Because somebody is ill. Where is your compassion?

Mr J.N. HYDE: Because this is the second item, it will have to be brought on for debate, so the Minister for Planning and I and others have issues with the timing.

Mr R.F. Johnson: If you want to bring on that education motion, you can do that. Then we'll adjourn it so that the minister can address her side next week when she is back, I hope. So you can bring on the education motion.

Mr J.N. HYDE: We cannot debate the motion properly without the minister being here.

Mr R.F. Johnson: If she is not well, that's all we can do.

Mr J.N. HYDE: The Leader of the House has no understanding of democracy. But that is not the issue; okay. The Leader of the House has cast aspersions on the opposition, saying that it is causing delays and changes in government business. That is not the case. I remember the star jumps, Premier. I remember those late nights; I remember all those other stunts.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Do you remember what time of night it was?

Mr J.N. HYDE: Yes, I do.

Mr C.J. Barnett: And do you remember what was happening the following day?

Mr M. McGowan: You were going to Merredin —

Mr C.J. Barnett: That's right.

Mr M. McGowan: — to campaign against the Leader of the National Party.

Mr C.J. Barnett: And one of our members drove off the road. Fortunately, he wasn't injured.

Mr J.N. HYDE: The Premier came into office with a great commitment that we would be staying on family-friendly hours, and there we were yesterday, until 12.30 this morning, still debating 12 amendments from the government. The time before on the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority Bill —

Mr R.F. Johnson: That, I think, is the first time you've sat past midnight.

Mr J.N. HYDE: The week before with the MRA bill, we had the same situation, with late amendments being moved by the government to legislation that it was rushing through.

Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr John Hyde; Mr Paul Papalia; Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Bill Johnston; Dr Janet Woollard; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Fran Logan; Mr Ian Blayney

Mr R.F. Johnson: And you did the same thing when you were in government. Don't you remember that? You've got very, very short memories. You did it all the time.

Mr J.N. HYDE: The Leader of the House's first argument was that when we were in government, bills were going through quickly. Now he is trying to argue that we had amendments and we were slowing them up. The Leader of the House has to get his argument right. He cannot have it both ways.

I offer my apologies to the Minister for Planning if, indeed, we have to bring on the batching plant debate this afternoon, and to the Minister for Heritage, because the other two bills I have are heritage bills. It may be that we will have to bring them on for debate under private members' business. I do not know, and I will not be aware until we get these changes sorted out, but I apologise to both ministers in case those bills are brought on.

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro) [12.30 pm]: I want to address the comments that were made by the Leader of the House earlier in response to the member for Rockingham. The Premier was not here when the leader made his original speech. The clear suggestion in his speech was that debate on the Cat Bill 2011 went on for an unduly long time last night as a result of the opposition filibustering —

Mr R.F. Johnson: I never said a word like that! You read *Hansard*! That's your problem. I never said anything like that.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The Leader of the House can claim what he wants to claim; I will tell him how his suggestion was viewed. His colleagues over there are nodding their heads in agreement at the suggestion that the opposition was filibustering last night.

Mr R.F. Johnson: They may do, but I never said that.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The Leader of the House's observations confirmed the paucity of any intellectual rigour being applied by the government to any legislation, but particularly to the part of the Cat Bill that was debated at length last night. The original clause 51(c) of the Cat Bill is incredible.

Dr G.G. Jacobs interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: That is the point; the government did not debate it in the first place. It did not even bother to look at it. Members on that side of the house —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: If members in this place are going to stand and revisit a range of legislation that has been through this place, I am going to stop them. Member for Warnbro, I have given you the call and you have an opportunity to speak to the motion that the Leader of the House introduced into this place some time ago. That is what you have the opportunity to do. I appreciate your reference to the events of last night, but I do not need to hear anything about what happened last night in detail.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will try to tread carefully here, Mr Speaker, because I understand that you are suggesting that I should not talk about last night, but the Leader of the House made the suggestion that there is a need to streamline and hasten the passage of bills through this place as a result of the opposition's behaviour. There is a clause in the Cat Bill that will again be debated today; it is entirely unreasonable and was not given any scrutiny by any member on the government side of the house, as is evidenced by the fact that the government amended its own bill 11 times in response to our highlighting its flaws. Mr Speaker, you may not be aware—there are ministers in this place who are not aware—of the onerous and aggressive nature of this particular clause. It is outrageous that it is included in the Cat Bill. I understand the suggestion that people cannot believe that it was debated in the Cat Bill. This is a law that allows someone —

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, we are not debating the Cat Bill. It may be the case that further debate occurs around that particular bill, but that is not what we are dealing with at the moment; we are dealing with a motion that the Leader of the House has introduced. If you wish to address that, I give you that opportunity. If you do not wish to address it, and you continue in this vein, I will simply sit you down.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will draw my comments to a conclusion, Mr Speaker. While we are debating this particular bill I will continue to argue against it, but if the government at any time in the future introduces legislation that unnecessarily, aggressively and without any justification impedes the freedoms of the people of Western Australia, I will always oppose it and take pride in opposing it. Government members should hang their heads in shame at the fact that they are not even aware of the potential impact on the freedoms of Western Australians of this very shabbily drafted legislation.

Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr John Hyde; Mr Paul Papalia; Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Bill Johnston; Dr Janet Woollard; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Fran Logan; Mr Ian Blayney

MS M.M. QUIRK (Girrawheen) [12.34 pm]: I want to record some comments. We have had notice for the past few weeks that we would be sitting late on Wednesday nights and we have altered our arrangements as a result; for example, we have cancelled other appointments in anticipation that we would be sitting late, but on those occasions we have not. I have to say that this does not reflect well on the Leader of the House's organisation of debate in this place. It is particularly unsatisfactory that he is pointing the finger at us for inadequacies in legislation that mean we have to have greater scrutiny of legislation in this place. I also have to say that his bills are in large part responsible for some of the extended debates in this place. I would suggest that if the Leader of the House actually had answers for the questions we put to him during the course of consideration in detail, it might expedite passage of bills through this place.

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington) [12.35 pm]: I want to make a couple of comments as well. I point out to members that one of the reasons for the new pattern of sittings being introduced some years ago was to make parliamentary sittings more family friendly. I am a person who has a family, with children at home. On the nights Parliament sits late, I have to arrange for a person to be there with them because they are not of an age at which they can be at home by themselves. Constantly changing the sitting patterns is not an adequate way to respect families. A member interjected that my family has half a million dollars, or something like that; I do not remember the exact words used. This is the sort of inane and arrogant behaviour that comes from the other side of the chamber. The arrangement of having a 7.00 pm finish on a Wednesday night and a 5.00 pm finish on a Thursday was entered into to make it easier for families like mine to spend time together. Members opposite may not believe it is appropriate for families to spend time together, but I do not share that view. I am happy to work hard in this chamber, and I do, including last night on the Cat Bill. I also point out that the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (Special Powers) Bill 2011 had dozens of amendments that I suggested and that the Minister for Police said should not be proceeded with, but then he came back and moved them on a message from the other place. I ask the Leader of the House to please remember that these sitting arrangements were entered into to make the Parliament more family friendly. I have a family who are getting older; they are now teenagers. Constantly changing the sitting patterns of the chamber is not an appropriate response. The government has never said to the opposition how long it wants to allocate to bills. It has never said, "These bills will come on on these days." We get a letter one week before with 14 bills listed, but no knowledge of when they will be debated. We have to research all 14 bills, and then only two or three are ever brought to the chamber. The management of this house is a shambles, and it is going to take the Leader of the House to stand up and do his job so that we can get the house back in order, because the current arrangements are not working for the opposition or the government.

DR J.M. WOOLLARD (Alfred Cove) [12.38 pm]: I thought I would follow on from the member for Cannington's comments about the sitting hours of this house. Before the thirty-eighth Parliament was formed, I wrote to all members about sitting hours. It is interesting that the member for Cannington is now saying that he would like to have more professional sitting hours so that he can be at home with his family. I think it would be interesting if members on that side of the house were to maybe put this matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges, which looks at the sitting hours for this house, so that it could recommend what hours it would like our sitting hours modified to, because there are members on both sides who would like more professional sitting hours. Now might be the time to have another look at that issue, so I suggest that members on both sides write to the procedure and privileges committee with their suggestions as to what the hours could be modified to so that they are professional sitting hours and not late, family-unfriendly sitting hours.

MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland) [12.39 pm]: I am provoked by those comments. Someone has suggested that we on this side should perhaps have longer memories. I have a very long memory and remember when Hon George Strickland was Speaker of this house, and when I and others, on the Procedure and Privileges Committee, amended the sitting hours. We had a trial in the first instance because there was a lot of opposition to the current set hours. For people who were not here at the time, this house sat the same hours on Tuesday, but from 2.00 pm and not 12 noon on a Wednesday. We had a dinner break and would sit after dinner on Wednesday. We had dinner breaks between 6.00 and 7.30 pm on both Tuesday and Wednesday. There was an hour break every Wednesday between 6.00 and 7.00 pm and we sat Wednesday nights. We did not start until 11.00 am on Thursday. We had a one and a half hour dinner break. We took half an hour off the Tuesday dinner break and we added two hours to Thursday morning. We decided not to sit Wednesday nights but to grab the hour between 6.00 and 7.00 pm that would normally have been the dinner break. Those hours were given up so that we did not have to sit on a Wednesday night.

I know that the Leader of the House will say that when Labor was in government members had to sit on a Wednesday night. However, I am not aware of the system being in operation that this Leader of the House now has, in which the opposition receives a letter on Friday putting members on notice that they may be required to sit on Wednesday night. Members do not really know. They may be required to sit on a Wednesday night, but

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 21 September 2011]

p7453b-7461a

Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr John Hyde; Mr Paul Papalia; Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Bill Johnston; Dr Janet Woollard; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Fran Logan; Mr Ian Blayney

they do not officially know. This has happened for a number of weeks in a row now. On a couple of those Wednesday nights when people have cancelled things or told their families to make other arrangements, it has not eventuated. We have gone home at seven o'clock!

Mr R.F. Johnson: Bonus.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The Leader of the House interjects that it is a bonus, but it is too late to find out, as we found out.

Mr R.F. Johnson interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: We did not find out until seven o'clock when it happened a few weeks ago. I do not think that is good management of the house. I know that it was not only opposition members who did not know, because I saw government members coming into the chamber at seven o'clock not knowing whether the bells were ringing to send people home or to reconvene the house. There was quite a lot of confusion. I understand that on the occasional Wednesday night there may be a reason to sit, and of course opposition members appreciate notice of that. But this is not an isolated incident. It has happened for a number of weeks in a row now. I think it is a case of things being mismanaged. I think it is bad for families. I do not think it right that, despite those hours given back into the sitting week, we find ourselves sitting on Wednesday nights.

Mr R.F. Johnson: But you used to keep us here through the night sometimes; all through the night until five or six in the morning. You haven't had to do that since we have been in government.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The minister can have his little "you said, she said, they did, you did" game or whatever.

Mr R.F. Johnson: I am just quoting facts.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I am saying that it is not only a matter of sitting hours, as outlined by the member for Alfred Cove, although maybe the sitting hours could do with some further improvements, but also a matter of notice and consistency. People advise community groups and others that they will be able to attend something at 7.00 or 7.30 on a Wednesday night, and a few days beforehand they have to say that they cannot attend. And then we have this incredible situation on Wednesday night when the Parliament does not sit. Members have to say that they could have gone to the function but did not know that the house would not be sitting. It looks like a complete shemuzzle. The other factor is family. The minister can say, "Oh it's a bonus; you can go home to your family", but people want to make arrangements for meals and so forth. This job is tough on families. I am speaking from a woman's perspective. Like the member for Cannington, my children are older now and whether we sit or do not sit on a Wednesday night is not the issue for me that it was 10 years ago. Personally, it does not matter that much any more. But if we want younger people to be able to participate in this place, we really have to honour the obligation to give people some definitive times. It is all very well to say that those with young families who get to go home at eight or nine o'clock find the kids in bed anyway. There is not a lot of point. It really does not matter whether we finish at 9.00 pm or midnight because the kids have had their meal and gone to bed. Members have missed out on that opportunity. I am not being completely negative about this and want to put on the record that the non-sitting weeks provide plenty of opportunities for members of Parliament, male or female, to spend good time with their families and to be able to go to sports days and other events and have some good family time. However, the sitting weeks are an issue. I think we had a more progressive group of people with a more progressive attitude in Parliament 12 years ago than we have today. It is a very sad fact, but we have gone backwards, and the uncertainty about what happens on a Wednesday night adds to that.

MR F.M. LOGAN (Cockburn) [12.45 pm]: In speaking to the motion and the comments made by the Leader of the House I want to raise a couple of things. Firstly, the Leader of the House claims the intransigence of the opposition when dealing with government legislation to justify this motion for extension.

Mr R.F. Johnson: I never said that. I never said words to that effect at all. I did not use those words. You weren't even in here when I made my comments.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: You said it only a minute ago. Somehow the opposition is stretching out the debate.

Mr R.F. Johnson: I never said that either. Honestly, you read *Hansard*; and I hope you will apologise to me.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: The bills before this house, such as the bill debated last night and the other bills that have taken a fair time to deal with, are important pieces of legislation.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Nobody is arguing about that.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: They are important pieces of legislation. In a significant number of the cases, we either oppose the bill as the opposition because we do not agree with the legislation the government brings to the house, or we oppose some of the amendments to the bills or certain parts of the bill. As the opposition, it is our right and duty to hold the government to account and to point out and put on the public record the reasons we

Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr John Hyde; Mr Paul Papalia; Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Bill Johnston; Dr Janet Woollard; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Fran Logan; Mr Ian Blayney

oppose the government's legislation. And if that takes a fair period, so it should. The minister cannot point the finger of blame at the opposition for the management of the house. We are doing our job. When it comes to the Leader of the Opposition doing his job, there is a pattern —

Ms M.M. Quirk: Leader of the House.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Sorry, Leader of the House—a pattern is appearing.

Mr R.F. Johnson: I could never be the Leader of the Opposition; I assure you of that.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I think you had a dream once.

Mr R.F. Johnson: I do not think that you would have me.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: No, no, minister. But you certainly had that in mind once. I remember that. I remember that when in opposition the member for Hillarys had his eyes on the prize.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Come on; let us get on with the business. Come on!

Mr F.M. LOGAN: If the Leader of the House had come and spoken nicely to us, we would have helped with the numbers. But he did not!

Mr R.F. Johnson: I am sure that you would have, but can we get on with the business now?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: The issue is the management of the house. As I was saying—

Mr R.F. Johnson: No, it is not.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: It is. It is, and a pattern is occurring. The Leader of the House can look back at the legislative record of the house over the past three years to see the pattern that has occurred. In the autumn session of parliament, fewer bills come into the house than in the spring session—such as now. Fewer bills are introduced in the autumn session than in the spring session. The reason for that is all the ministers go on holiday during the summer period and do not sign off on legislation to get it into the house. Thus, during the autumn session, from March through to the end of June, we have fewer pieces of legislation before the house. Why is that? It is because the ministers decide to go on holiday over the Christmas period and through the summer period.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Not me.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: You have in the past; I am sure you have. In fact, the Leader of the House has gone for three-week holidays sometimes during parliamentary sittings. Is that not right?

Mr R.F. Johnson: No I don't. No I don't! Do not be untruthful.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, members!

Mr J.M. Francis interjected.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Do you want me to start on you? That is what is occurring here. A significant number of ministers use the summer break to go on holiday and do not get legislation ready for Parliament. That is the truth and it is backed up by fact—go and look at the record—so what happens is that after the winter break —

The SPEAKER: Member for Cockburn, I will ask you to address the motion.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I am, Mr Speaker. It goes to the order of the management of the house and the reason why this motion is before the house.

What happens is that after the winter break, suddenly there is a massive rush of legislation. It happened last year and it happened the year before and, here we are, it is happening again this year.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Tell us what the motion is.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: The Leader of the Opposition does not like this.

Mr J.M. Francis: He's not the Leader of the Opposition!

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I am sorry, the Leader of the House is trying to interject and howl me down because he does not like the truth.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Just tell us what the motion is.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: The Leader of the House is responsible for managing this house and here we are again in the autumn session coming up to Christmas and he will be demanding that we have to get this legislation through and that there will be more bills coming into the house. We will be sitting later and later.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 21 September 2011]
p7453b-7461a

Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr John Hyde; Mr Paul Papalia; Speaker; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Bill Johnston; Dr Janet Woollard; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Fran Logan; Mr Ian Blayney

Mr R.F. Johnson: We are actually in the spring session.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: In the spring session, sorry. We will be sitting later and later in the spring session coming up towards Christmas. That is what will happen.

Mr R.F. Johnson: You think you're back in England!

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Yes, I know; I did for that point!

That is what will happen. Members should just wait! This will not be the last time in this session that this motion will come before this house. We will see this on a regular basis leading up to Christmas.

Mr R.F. Johnson: No, you won't.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Yes, we will; for sure. We had it last year, we had it the year before and we will have it again this year. I point out to the Leader of the House, who can influence this as he is a cabinet minister, that this is about his cabinet colleagues and the way they go about their business during the summer break to make sure that legislation is ready for the following parliamentary year. They should not be taking that length of time away from their very serious and important jobs. As cabinet ministers, they should be getting on, doing their work and bringing into this house legislation that the Leader of the House says is important in the spring session of the house.

MR I.C. BLAYNEY (Geraldton) [12.52 pm]: I want to speak briefly to this motion. We have heard four metropolitan members from the opposition speak about this issue. I quietly remind them that members, like me, who live in the bush come to this place on Monday night and do not go back until Friday morning. I therefore do not see my family for four days in a row when Parliament is sitting. Am I complaining about it? No. If members cannot stand the heat, they should get out of the kitchen! It comes with the job.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Joondalup and member for Cannington, I call you both formally to order for the first time today!

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: The other point is that the opposition gave us —

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cannington, I am formally going to call you to order for the second time today.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: The opposition gave us the one vote, one value legislation. That means that a lot of rural members hardly see their families when the Parliament is not sitting because of the size of some of the rural electorates. I therefore think there should be a bit of balance.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Ha, ha!

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: The member for Cannington can laugh about it; we all know that he does not care about any electorate outside of Perth, and he will suffer for that at the next election.

Question put and passed.