

Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Helen Morton; Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Stephen Dawson; Hon Col Holt; Hon Lynn MacLaren; Hon Alanna Clohesy; Hon Michael Mischin

LIBERAL–NATIONAL GOVERNMENT — BROKEN PROMISES

Motion

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition) [10.10 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house condemns the Liberal–National government for its ever-growing list of broken promises.

This government tells us that it places great value and weight on the Western Australia people’s trust in it at the 2013 election. The Premier has spoken of his great pride in being re-elected in what he claims to be his own right—no minority government, no balance of power held by the National Party, no friendly Independents to be relied upon, and make sure they stay in the cart. However, prior to the election there was an interesting indication of what would come after the election. Members will recall the proposition clearly put in the 2008 election that the Liberal Party would fund a railway line to Ellenbrook. That has been clearly demonstrated to be a broken promise. At first the Premier tried to describe it as the local member having gone a bit rogue and that just because a local member says something —

Hon Alyssa Hayden: That was after we matched the promise made by your government.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes, the Liberal Party did match that promise—that is the point—and then it claimed that it did not.

Hon Alyssa Hayden interjected.

Hon SUE ELLERY: This is a time-limited debate, so the honourable member can make her contribution in her 10-minute slot. This is my 20-minute slot.

The Premier’s promise was that there would be a rail line to Ellenbrook. What he then did for the next four years was wriggle and squirm and try to do anything except acknowledge that the government was not going to honour a promise. Then in February this year he said words to the effect, “Look, if you are going to take a literal meaning of words, then, yes, I guess you can call it a broken promise.” Immediately after the election he then said that he did not think people paid particular attention to election promises, and that is when he made the comment that, really, what happened at the 2013 election was not about specific election promises; it was about trust, and people trusted he would do the right thing and they did not have to worry so much about the specifics of the actual promises. He was roundly criticised for that comment as a demonstration of the arrogance of the man. Since the March election there have been a series of broken promises, and some of them happened, as in the case of Verve, within a matter of weeks. It was with astonishing speed that the first series of broken promises occurred.

I also want to touch on several of the broken promises, of which there are many, that constituents in the South Metropolitan Region have raised with me. However, before I talk about those specific broken promises, I want to raise a more generic broken promise—that is, the promise that was literally stamped on material circulated by the Liberal Party in electorates during the election campaign that the Liberal Party’s promises were fully funded and fully costed. *The West Australian* newspaper reveals to us today, on page 1, that that actually means fully funded, fully costed on the credit card. The budget later today will reveal that, in fact, the government is going to increase the debt of all Western Australian taxpayers to meet the promise that the government knew it would never be able to honour—that is, the promise that a rail line to the airport was fully funded and fully costed. Members already know that, because two days before polling day the Under Treasurer, when releasing the costings, revealed that the assumptions behind the Liberal Party’s promise for that rail line were based on a majority investment by the federal government. Interestingly, the Liberal Party has been keen to assert, certainly since the federal election date was announced, that it will win the election on 7 September. During the state election campaign the Premier certainly anticipated there would be a federal Liberal government, and he knew that a federal Liberal government would not commit to rail funding but would commit to road funding. In fact, the federal Leader of the Opposition at that time used an expression I had not heard before, but which I like and may claim as my own: it is not in our knitting to fund rail. So fully funded, fully costed was literally stamped in one of those wax seal stamps on all Liberal Party material—that is, their promises were fully funded and fully costed, but they were not.

The people of the South Metropolitan Region have raised with me on several occasions the issue of electricity prices. They also have raised with me the issue of Fiona Stanley Hospital, which is in the South Metropolitan Region and is not far from my electorate office. Representations are also made to me about the forced council amalgamations, and I should declare my interest in that matter. I am a ratepayer in the Town of Victoria Park

Extract from Hansard

[COUNCIL — Thursday, 8 August 2013]

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and I am not keen on the ludicrous excision of Crown Casino from the boundaries of the proposed amalgamated South Perth and Victoria Park councils. I have already mentioned the airport rail line.

The other point I wanted to raise about broken promises is revealed in this morning's *The West Australian*, which reveals part of what members will be told at two o'clock this afternoon. The article by Gareth Parker, the paper's state political editor, states —

The Budget will formally commit the Government to its “big three” transport projects promised during this year's election campaign—the \$2 billion airport rail line, the \$1.9 billion MAX light-rail system and the \$845 million Swan Valley bypass road dubbed as the Perth-Darwin Highway — with each to begin construction in 2016.

But, of course, part of the promise was about when the rail line, in particular, would be finished. We are now advised that that will not occur within the timing of the promise made at the election.

I now turn to electricity prices. During the five years of the Barnett government electricity prices have increased massively. Over five years electricity prices have increased by 69.27 per cent. That has caused people real pain. The government will debate that they had to do that because of particular circumstances. There is no doubt—in fact, the Premier has acknowledged this—that the level of the increases and the speed of the increases have caused people real pain. The Premier has expressed regret about that, as he should have, and has indicated that if he were to do it again, he would do it differently. Nevertheless, there has been effectively a 70 per cent increase in electricity prices, which is why particular attention was paid to the promises and the words of the Premier in the election campaign on 19 February. People had been burnt by not only a 70 per cent increase in electricity prices, but also the sharp spike in the prices and the speed at which they happened. People wanted to know what the Premier had to say about not only whether electricity prices would increase, but also what the extent of those increases would be so that they could manage their household budgets.

At the time the Premier said, “We will keep electricity prices at or around the rate of inflation.” Then, of course, on 9 May it was revealed that from 1 July the cost of electricity would increase by four per cent. Other increases included water by six per cent, gas by 6.4 per cent and the emergency services levy by 7.8 per cent. The Premier said that electricity prices would increase at or around the rate of inflation. The rate of inflation at the time that he announced the increase was going to be four per cent was in fact 2.75 per cent. People were really not happy that it was significantly higher than 2.75 per cent.

That meant an extra \$218 a year on people's household electricity bills. Of course, it was not just one bill being increased; there are all the others I have identified as well. People got really cross about that. They were surprised and concerned about the broken promise made within a matter of two weeks of the election to remerge Verve and Synergy. People were surprised about it and their hackles were raised because they were worried that it might mean further increases in electricity prices. The Premier said that the increase would be at or around the rate of inflation but they were later told that it would now be higher than that.

The other promise made was that Fiona Stanley Hospital, the major capital investment program in the health portfolio, would be built and ready on time. We were told that the beds would be ready and that the hospital would be up and operating—in the broader sense of the word—on time. The Treasurer came out to Fiona Stanley Hospital in the South Metropolitan Region in October when he was the acting health minister. He said the hospital was due to open in 18 months—on time and on budget—and that was recorded in the *Melville Times* at the time. He made it clear that there was no reason to expect that Fiona Stanley Hospital would not meet the targets set for it. We found out subsequently that on 10 June this year, the Minister for Health, Dr Hames, said that the opening of Fiona Stanley Hospital had been rescheduled from April 2014 because of the scale and complexity of the project. It was to be opened and running in April 2014, but now it will not be fully operational until April 2015, despite the fact that during the election campaign Dr Hames had committed to an opening date of April 2014. In fact, in January 2013, Dr Hames reiterated in a ministerial media statement that the opening date for Fiona Stanley Hospital would be April 2014.

Members might have noted that I asked a question in this place the other day about how many regular scheduled meetings the Minister for Health had with his director general. Ministers have regularly scheduled meetings with their directors general and they also have a series of other meetings with their respective departments. Sometimes those regularly scheduled meetings are held once a week and sometimes they are held once a fortnight. The answer we received was that in November there were two regular scheduled meetings between the Minister for Health and the director general, one in December and one in January. When Minister Hames was asked when he was told about the change in the operating date, he answered that he was not told before the election. He has also revealed that the Department of Health said it was aware in November that the opening date would need to be pushed back a year. The Department of Treasury has confirmed as well that it was not told.

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This is the scenario we are expected to believe: in the minister's two meetings with the director general in November, in the one meeting in December and in the one meeting in January, the director general did not say, "By the way, Dr Hames, you know that big building down the freeway a bit, the Fiona Stanley one—the major capital investment in the health portfolio? There is a bit of a problem, it is not going to be ready to go in 2014." The director general did not raise that point and neither did the Minister for Health ask how that big building down the freeway was going, whether it was on target and whether there were any issues he needed to know about. We are expected to believe that neither the director general nor the Minister for Health, in the course of those four meetings, said those things. Bear in mind that there would have been a bunch of other meetings as well between the minister and his senior health bureaucrats during that time. I am just referring to the regular scheduled meetings. Bear in mind also that it would be unusual for a meeting to be between just the director general and the Minister for Health; it is more likely there would be other senior bureaucrats there as well. None of them in the course of those conversations said, knowing that the health department said it knew there would be a problem and it knew the date would have to be pushed back in November, that they had something to tell the minister about Fiona Stanley Hospital. And the minister did not ask, "How is Fiona Stanley Hospital going? You know how we announced in October that it would be on time and on budget? Is there any issue with that?" He did not ask the questions and no-one from the health department raised it with him. I do not think that is credible and I do not believe it. There is a broken promise in that the government promised the hospital's completion would be in 2014. The health department knew in November that that would not be, but for some reason nobody in the government thought it was reasonable to say that to the electors in the South Metropolitan Region, or indeed anywhere else in Western Australia, because Fiona Stanley Hospital will be a centrepiece for the delivery of excellence of service for people across metropolitan Perth, and indeed Western Australia. Nobody thought they should tell the voters that what was said in October actually was not true. The health department knew it was not true in November, but it did not think about the fact that there was an election coming up and that it should probably tell the government that one of the things it promised would not be delivered on time. Nobody thought to do it and I find that incredible.

The other issue I touch on that has been getting some attention in the South Metropolitan Region is forced amalgamations of local governments. Premier Barnett said the government would not force amalgamations. In July this year he said that the number of metropolitan councils would be reduced from 30 to 14 by July 2015. I think that is what he wants us to believe. He went on to say that it will happen. The government probably hopes it happens by osmosis, but the Premier said it is going to happen. The clear logical conclusion of that is that it will happen with the government forcing the amalgamation. During the course of the election campaign the Premier told his own voters in his residents' newsletter in his own electorate in summer 2013 —

I have always believed that a combined council covering Claremont, Cottesloe, Mosman Park and Peppermint Grove makes sense, however claims that the State Government will use its powers to force such an amalgamation are simply not true.

But that is exactly what the Premier's government will do. The government was so worried about this that when the now Minister for Local Government, Tony Simpson, made a comment during the course of the election campaign that seemed to suggest that forced amalgamations would happen, he was very quickly instructed to issue a withdrawal and to make it clear that is not what he meant. Of course, we have heard since the decision on 30 July that that is exactly what will happen. The issue is not just about forced amalgamations. Some of the boundary changes do not make sense and impose an unreasonable burden on Victoria Park and South Perth to excise Crown Perth Casino. If members look at the map of the proposed boundaries, they will see they are ridiculous. The natural boundary is the river. I do not think there is any suggestion of the Town of Victoria Park not having properly dealt with the issues that Crown has brought to it over the last however many years, and a range of different developments have occurred on that site. The boundaries do not make sense. The other proposition that will of course be put is that through changes to legislation councils will not have the capacity to appeal the decisions in the way that they previously did. I will run out of time, but there is a litany of broken promises. This government is an embarrassment of broken promises. The trust that the Premier claims is so important to him has been well and truly broken and we will see more of that this afternoon.

HON HELEN MORTON (East Metropolitan — Minister for Mental Health) [10.30 am]: I want to respond to some of the comments made by Hon Sue Ellery, most of which relate to areas that I represent or in which I have a particular interest. I want to start by seriously asking Hon Sue Ellery why an unprecedented number of Western Australian voters in the last election wanted us to govern. The answer is clear when we consider the outcome of that election. It is because they know this government can make decisions; it can also monitor, assess and reassess programs and projects, and if necessary can slightly alter course on an action, move out a time line or rearrange a priority. As a government, nothing is more important than being able to do that and to continue to make decisions. Western Australians wanted us to govern because they saw us as sensible. They felt they could

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trust us to do the right thing at the right time in response to changing circumstances. All of the issues the Leader of the Opposition says are broken promises are those sorts of things. The Leader of the Opposition does not get it! I am still really surprised that she does not get it and she does not understand that is what people want from a government.

The Leader of the Opposition has given the government the opportunity, over and over again, to demonstrate its ability to make those sorts of decisions, yet her position is that somehow or other this ability is something that Western Australians should be concerned about! The Leader of the Opposition operates in the little tiny cocoon of this chamber and she thinks that people out there are taking notice of what she is saying, but that rarely ever happens. Hon Sue Ellery is desperate to use these examples to try to discredit this government, but she has no traction out there—believe me! The member thinks she is having some effect, but she is not!

Several members interjected.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Members opposite should let me make a couple of comments about how silly their comments are.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Adele Farina): Order, members! The minister has the call.

Hon HELEN MORTON: I will show members opposite how their comments have been discredited. The Leader of the Opposition raised the issue of the Ellenbrook railway line. Members opposite were in government when they came out with a policy to put a railway through to Ellenbrook. In opposition, we trusted, believed and thought that the former government might have done some work on this and there might have been an assessment and analysis of the numbers; and, of course, if all of that stacked up, then why would we not match it? However, when we were elected to government, we found that nothing had been done and when we analysed the railway line to Ellenbrook, the figures did not stack up. Members opposite knew it did not stack up, and they knew that when they went to the election in 2008. But we had decided to take the former government on trust that it had done that work; but it had not been done! What an absolutely useless, discredited argument that is! Members opposite will have to wait until tomorrow to find out about the government's commitment to the Perth–Darwin highway.

I will talk a little more about the comments Hon Sue Ellery made around so-called forced local government amalgamations. Again, this is quite incredible. Obviously, the member does not understand how the Local Government Act operates. I am interested she did not raise any of the issues around the Dadour poll provisions in that act, so I will not bother talking about them either. The state government is following the existing statutory process, whereby the Local Government Advisory Board makes recommendations to the minister as to whether a change should occur. That statutory authority is established under the Local Government Act. It is an independent board that will advise on the submissions made by local governments. The minister cannot override the Local Government Advisory Board to force a merger, unless there is legislation in play. Unless we change the legislation, the minister cannot go against the Local Government Advisory Board.

Hon Sue Ellery: Aren't you going to?

Hon HELEN MORTON: The Leader of the Opposition is trying to suggest that it has happened, but it has not happened. Any forced merger would require an act of Parliament, and there is no act of Parliament in play that will allow that to happen. It is time you folk understood that!

Hon Sue Ellery: So there won't be any forced amalgamations?

Hon HELEN MORTON: The state government is not forcing amalgamations; it is provoking local governments to get on board with what we need. The state government has invited local governments to make submissions to the Local Government Advisory Board, and they will be considered. The Local Government Advisory Board will need to have regard to the government's policies on this, but it cannot be forced by government to put in place something that it does not want. The Local Government Advisory Board will make a recommendation to the minister to accept or reject, and the minister can ask the Local Government Advisory Board to consider varying a proposal. If the board recommends the rejection of a boundary adjustment, the minister must accept that recommendation. Where is the forced amalgamation in that? It is absolutely nowhere! That will result in no change to the local government in question. The minister cannot force the Local Government Advisory Board to recommend a merger. A merger cannot occur unless both the minister and the Local Government Advisory Board are in agreement. Can members opposite please get that clear in their minds: it cannot happen, if it does not happen together! The minister has the right to make a submission to the Local Government Advisory Board recommending an amalgamation, but this will be a last resort and the minister is

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bound by the same independent process. There is no broken promise in that, because there is no forced amalgamation taking place.

I will tell members opposite about the other form of broken promise that they raised. They raised the Fiona Stanley Hospital. It is amazing. It is one of the biggest infrastructure projects in WA's history. It is fantastic. It will take its first patients in October 2014. Hon Sue Ellery suggested that would be in 2015, but it will take its first patients in October 2014. It is a \$2 billion project, fully operational. It will take its first patients in 2014. The Leader of the Opposition knows very well—she probably does not know, but I will tell her anyway—that when new hospitals take up, they take up in stages. It is an incremental process. We do not have the whole hospital operating full bang whizz on day one. It is not possible to do that; the hospital will take up in stages. The first patients will be in that hospital in October 2014.

Another point about one of the comments Hon Sue Ellery made is that construction is on time and on budget. It is 90 per cent completed right now. It is an amazing feat. As I said, it is one of the biggest infrastructure projects in WA's history; but, more than that, it is the most complex and technologically advanced of all of the tertiary hospitals and health services that we have ever built in Western Australia—probably in the nation, to be honest. One of the most amazing things is that this is the first time we have tried to put in place the closest thing possible to a paperless hospital. I can tell members opposite, from having opened a hospital when I was general manager of a hospital, that many things have to happen. Every service has to be tested and everything has to be trialled and bedded down. Everything has to go through a few practice runs on a few occasions before people can feel confident that everything in this health service will operate smoothly, and because of the complexity of this project that will take an extra six months. I do not think that is a broken promise. I see that once again as being a decision by a very responsible, sensitive government that is able to push out a time line by six months on the basis of ensuring that patient safety is of absolute importance in what it wants to do.

A couple of other points were raised, but I have responded to the main comments. Any suggestion that those two issues in particular—also the Ellenbrook rail line, and members will find out about the Perth–Darwin highway in the budget—represent a broken promise is absolutely stupid, ludicrous and ridiculous. The public of Western Australia know that. That is why we have been asked to govern.

HON AMBER-JADE SANDERSON (East Metropolitan) [10.39 am]: I rise to support the motion moved by Hon Sue Ellery. I will also talk about the local government merger issue, in particular in the East Metropolitan Region. I want to repeat the words of Hon Sue Ellery about the statements made by the Premier and the previous Minister for Local Government that they did not support forced amalgamations of local government. They went to the election with a policy of voluntary amalgamations. I asked the minister today to clearly rule out forced amalgamations. If it is not a broken promise, rule it out. But the minister did not do that.

Hon Helen Morton: I did.

Hon AMBER-JADE SANDERSON: No, she did not.

Hon Helen Morton: I absolutely did.

Hon AMBER-JADE SANDERSON: She should stand and clearly say that there will be none in the metropolitan area.

Hon Helen Morton: I just did it. You weren't listening. Is there something wrong? Can't you hear or something?

Hon AMBER-JADE SANDERSON: Despite the repeated statements, councils were encouraged to enter into voluntary discussions, and that is what happened. A number of councils dug in and said that they did not want to do it and some councils saw the writing on the wall. There is an acknowledgement across the sector, in both the country and the metropolitan area, that some amalgamation and reform of local government need to occur. A number of councils entered into discussions and came to a mutually agreed position with other councils. One of those councils was the Town of Bassendean, which is in my electorate and in the minister's electorate of the East Metropolitan Region.

Hon Helen Morton: It's a basket case.

Hon Stephen Dawson: That is outrageous to call it a basket case.

Hon AMBER-JADE SANDERSON: That is outrageous. The Town of Bassendean has a natural historical affinity with west Guildford. It has a clear town centre. It wants to maintain that identity and its active community. It entered into discussions with the City of Swan about a voluntary amalgamation, and the City of Swan and the Town of Bassendean came to an agreement that they would merge. This was going to be the most

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practical and most conducive situation for both communities, rather than forcing together two councils that do not want to work together and causing historical issues. The minister talked about putting in submissions and working within the process. Both Swan and Bassendean signed off on a submission to the review panel at the end of June or early July that laid out their plans for a voluntary merger. They have not even received an acknowledgement of receipt of that submission from the review panel. They have not received any correspondence to say, “Thank you for participating in the process; your views have been duly noted.” The next information that they received, which was the leaked information given to the ABC, was on 30 August when the announcement was made that, despite being encouraged to enter into voluntary amalgamations—because, apparently, there will not be any forced ones—their views had been entirely ignored and they would be forced to amalgamate with the City of Bayswater. This is no slight on the City of Bayswater; it is a fantastic council. I grew up in that council area. It is just that it does not have a cooperative relationship with the Town of Bassendean currently. Bassendean clearly identifies with Swan. It wants to keep its town centre identity and go with the City of Swan, but that was completely ignored. This displays the arrogance and heavy-handedness of this government. Despite saying one thing before the election—that is, there will be no forced amalgamations—it completely ignored the wishes of the community and pushed it in a direction that is completely contrary to the way it wants to go.

The other issue with the amalgamations is the strange set of circumstances in which we still appear to be heading towards a local government election with immense uncertainty. We talk about wanting to improve local government and encouraging people to run and engage with communities. Who wants to run in a local government election when we are in the middle of a process that has taken four years to get this far, there is a huge amount of uncertainty and there is the large expense for taxpayers of running an election? The minister has made threats to councils that make public statements against the views of the government that he will potentially put in commissioners. Why are we even going through the farce of local government elections?

Hon Col Holt: That is why people stand for election.

Hon AMBER-JADE SANDERSON: Why—so that the government can put in commissioners?

Hon Col Holt: No, because they are passionate about it.

Hon AMBER-JADE SANDERSON: They are passionate about it, but they will just get removed when the government puts in commissioners. As Hon Col Holt wants to engage in the debate, I have to mention the absolute treachery of the Nationals in selling the metropolitan councils down the river to protect their own political base: “No, no; don’t touch anything that we have got going on. You guys can get pushed into forced mergers.” It was some grubby little backroom deal that has no understanding —

Hon Sue Ellery: What is the backroom deal? Is there any deal or not?

Hon Col Holt: Not that I am aware of.

Hon AMBER-JADE SANDERSON: That is not what the member’s leader said. He said that they did a deal whereby regional councils would not have to merge, but the government could do whatever it liked in the metropolitan area as that does not matter because it is not their political base. So they will sell us all down the river.

Hon Helen Morton: That is pure fabrication and you know it. The way you are talking about it is just silly.

Hon AMBER-JADE SANDERSON: He stated it in the media.

The other example of this heavy-handedness and complete misunderstanding of the communities involved is the issue of the City of Vincent going into the City of Stirling. I know a little about the City of Vincent; my husband was a councillor for eight years and he was deputy mayor for four years. That is an example of a small council that has worked incredibly well over a number of years to deliver low rates to ratepayers. It has a stable base. It provides fantastic amenities. It also delivers key state infrastructure projects. It is a small council that has delivered the redevelopment of nib Stadium and Beatty Park, which was absolutely falling apart. I have to admit that I gave my husband a terrible time while he was on council about the state of Beatty Park, so I am glad that the council finally did something about it. Anyone who has used the changing rooms over the past 10 years will know exactly what I mean. The council lobbied both Liberal and Labor governments for funding for those projects, and it has delivered both those projects.

The City of Vincent saw the writing on the wall. It is a small council. It is active, but it will obviously get merged somewhere. So it entered into voluntary discussions with the City of Perth to keep its inner-city identity. That council has worked incredibly hard over the last 10 years to develop those high streets as tourist destinations. There is the Mt Hawthorn precinct, and Scarborough Beach Road, Leederville Parade and Oxford Street. North Perth is next on the cards and it is starting to bustle. Beaufort Street, which has a very vibrant and

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active community, is currently split down the middle. The Beaufort Street Network has been operating for a number of years. It is working to develop independent businesses so that Beaufort Street becomes a tourist destination, just like Brunswick and Chapel Streets, and does not mould into a big shopping mall but has an identity and encourages local artists and businesses to thrive. The last Beaufort Street Festival attracted 80 000 to 100 000 people. The benefit of that festival to that area is huge. As an inner-city identity, it is much more in line with the City of Perth than the City of Stirling, which deals with broader suburbs and vaster areas. It is ridiculous for the government to say that it will split it down the middle and turn it into a three-part high street.

The whole process has been a farce and has gone on for too long. I have talked to the CEOs and mayors of the local governments both in my electorate and outside and they want this process done honestly and openly, but that has not happened. It does not make sense for the government to go to the election saying that it does not support forced mergers but then say on this side of the election, “These are the boundaries. We are going to ignore everything you say. We are going to do it my way or we will put in commissioners, and that is the end of it.”

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Leader of the House) [10.48 am]: I would like to reinforce the fact that the government will not even remotely support this motion for a number of reasons.

Several members interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I would like to remind members of the opposition of the comments of their leader when she said that she would appreciate being heard in silence. I would like to do exactly the same.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Adele Farina): Order, members! The Leader of the House has the call.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Thank you, Madam Deputy President. I have limited time.

As the deputy leader of the government has pointed out, and it is quite clear of course, the government was re-elected with an emphatic victory. Across the whole of Western Australia, people gave a roar of approval to the way they had been governed for the previous four and a half years. That needs to be made quite clear at the outset. I want to make that clear because sometimes members opposite tend to forget the fact that there was an overwhelming roar of approval for the way in which Western Australians had been governed over the last four and a half years.

I would like to deal specifically with one of the issues raised by the Leader of the Opposition with regard to the Verve–Synergy re-merger. We will no doubt have a much more extensive debate on this issue in the next couple of months. I would like to point out a few things —

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members. The Leader of the House has the call.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I will point out a couple of things with regard to Verve–Synergy because it has been a bone of contention for both sides of politics, particularly for the last five years and since the disaggregation process in 2006. After 2006, the actual model for the disaggregation process was fundamentally flawed. I will go through that. I will not deal specifically with the whole disaggregation process because that is not the intent of the motion, but I will bring it back to exactly why the Premier can hold firm on this issue. He has been very consistent with regard to his notion of re-merging Verve and Synergy. I notice that on the opposition website about broken promises I am quoted as saying —

“I’m of the view that the merging of Synergy and Verve will not solve the problems as they currently exist, therefore the government will not be following this path”

I stated that at the energy conference on 26 August 2009. Unfortunately the opposition have been a little too cute with their commentary there. They forgot that I actually qualified that comment. If members ask anyone else at that conference, aside from Hon Kate Doust, they will reinforce that. I qualified that because I said at the time we will continue to monitor the situation. I said we will make changes to the market rules, we will make changes to the vesting contract and we will continue to monitor it, which we did. Consistently over the next three years I made comments and the Premier made comments that there were still issues regarding Verve and Synergy.

Hon Kate Doust interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Do you mind? You’ll get your chance in a minute. Can you just be quiet! I will explain what —

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members! The Leader of the House has the call.

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Hon PETER COLLIER: The biggest issue with regard to the disaggregation process was that Verve has a capacity cap of 3 000 megawatts. That was intended to be reduced and subsequently new generation would be provided to the private sector. Ideally, that would bring in private sector investment and push downward pressure on prices. That is what we were fed in 2006 when this bill went through Parliament. Not only did then energy minister, Hon Eric Ripper, and the Premier at the time say it would put downward pressure on prices, but they also actually gave a figure—they said it would reduce prices by eight per cent. Interestingly enough, in April 2008 the then Premier received a report from the Office of Energy recommending an increase of 70 per cent in electricity prices to get to cost-reflective levels. That was the draft report. When I received the final report in January 2009 it said we needed a 117 per cent increase in electricity prices to get to cost-reflective levels. This is from a disaggregated system that was meant to reduce electricity prices by eight per cent. Not only did it not reduce electricity prices, it also led to an enormous disparity between the cost of generating, retailing and distributing electricity and what we were recouping in tariffs. It was fundamentally flawed.

We looked at the prospect that one option may be to re-merge Verve and Synergy. We got an expert in the field, Peter Oates, to produce a report. He did a very, very good job. He provided two options. One option was to re-merge; the second option was to keep them as disaggregated units but make some changes to the market rules and the vesting contract. That is exactly what we did. As a result of changes to the vesting contract, this government saved Western Australians over \$1 billion because of changes to that vesting contract. We made some changes to the market rules but we still had a situation in which we had state-owned generation assets sitting idle in Cockburn and Kwinana. To turn them off we would be paying hundreds of millions of dollars to the private sector in capacity credits to ramp up and generate electricity for Western Australians. Do members honestly think that Western Australians care whether we are actually giving more generation to the private sector on the pretext that will reduce prices when in reality it was doing nothing other than increasing prices and turning off a state-owned generation asset? That is exactly what happened. As a result of that review we made the decision not to re-merge, but that was three years ago. I said quite categorically that we would monitor the situation. In fact I say to members opposite that if they go back to when I appeared on Friday's 7.30 WA program on ABC Television, I said exactly that: we will continue to monitor the situation with the prospect of re-merging Verve and Synergy. To suggest that it was not always a prospect for the government is nonsensical. It is absolutely nonsensical.

Hon Ken Travers: You were always going to do it; you just did not tell people before the election!

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is absolute nonsense.

Hon Ken Travers: You did so!

Hon PETER COLLIER: I am sorry that Hon Ken Travers feels that way, but he is wrong. I can tell him that he is actually wrong. We continued to monitor the situation. We injected hundreds of millions of dollars into the energy sector. At the end of five and a half years, after we had a flawed disaggregation process in which we had run out of electricity and gas—because there was a trip in the gas pipeline so Western Australians had to turn off their electric heaters et cetera—we went through the hottest summer on record and we had plenty of capacity. We now have a gas storage facility in the midwest that will provide plenty of supply if there is ever another trip in the gas pipeline. That is fundamentally good management. We still had a situation in which we were paying capacity credits to the private sector while at the same time we were turning off state-owned generation. In any language, that is wrong. It is fundamentally flawed.

The Premier has been quite consistent on this. He did not agree with the disaggregation process in 2006. All the way through when we were in government he constantly reiterated, as I did, that we will continue to monitor the situation and, if necessary, we would re-merge Verve and Synergy. The decision to re-merge Verve and Synergy was made after the election. It was made as a result of the fact there still remains some fundamental flaws in the structure of the energy units within Western Australia. One of the biggest criticisms of the Verve–Synergy re-merger was the fact that it did not provide opportunities for the private sector to invest in generation. That is just fundamentally wrong. That means we have a “gentailer”—a generator and a retailer together; which is very, very common across the globe.

A member interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes, they are called gentailers—a generator and a retailer.

Hon Sue Ellery: Thank you; that is enough!

Hon PETER COLLIER: I thought members would be interested!

Because of demand pressures et cetera, it constantly changes. The Independent Market Operator looks at pressures on the market. That means around 600 megawatts in capacity will be available for the private sector to invest in over the next seven to eight years. Actually, it is more than that; it is over 1 000. There is around 400 to

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500 in a renewable. The private sector will have plenty of opportunities in the renewable sector. We doubled the renewable component in the south west interconnected system when we were in government. For a conservative government, we went from below five per cent to over nine per cent. We ticked all the boxes. We now have a situation in which Verve and Synergy will be re-merged, yet there will still be plenty of opportunity for the private sector to invest in the electricity market.

HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral) [10.59 am]: I, too, rise to speak to the motion moved by Hon Sue Ellery that the Legislative Council condemns the Liberal–National government for its ever-growing list of broken promises. I note the Leader of the House tried to justify the broken promise on electricity prices, which we on this side do not agree with, or his rationale. However, I note he also did not go near the other 14 broken promises. Perhaps it is the case that he could not justify those and he knows that they were true broken promises and that people in the community are concerned about them.

The Leader of the House referred to our esteemed leader in the other place. Let me remind the Leader of the House, through the President, about what the Premier recently said on some of these issues. On the radio last week the Premier seemed to think that there is a media vendetta against him and that people are making this up and pulling it out of thin air. He seems to think that people in the community do not agree that he has broken his promises. The reality is that he is wrong. Essentially, the Premier said that the media had portrayed him as a Premier who had broken promises but he does not see it that way and does not think the community believed it either. On 6PR he said that he did not think people study these promises. I hate to tell him, but they do. People in the community hear and listen and see what political parties promise. In this case, members on the far side were elected at the last election based on their promises and not on how good they were last time. They essentially had a pact with the community and what did they do? They broke it. It is appalling. The community will pay. It did not take long. They talked about a list of promises leading up to 9 March and soon afterwards these promises started to drop off. People in the community are facing it.

Over the last couple of weeks I have been out in my electorate talking to people in Carnarvon, Fitzroy Crossing, Kalgoorlie, Broome and Karratha. I have spoken to them about the promises that have been made by this government pre the election and in the lead-up to today's budget. I want to raise some of those issues now in the chamber because I believe that some of these things will add to the ever-growing list of broken promises, which is what we referred to in this motion today.

In Carnarvon people are expecting money for a new 36-bed high-care aged-care facility. This was promised by a number of political parties before the election. People are waiting on this. People have been told, whether it is by ministers, parliamentary secretaries or local members, that this will be in today's budget. I fear this will be another broken promise for this community. Maybe there will be some money for this, but I do not think it will all be there. If it is all there, it would be one of the few projects in my region to be fully funded. People in Port Hedland are expecting the government to deal with the housing costs. More land is needed to help decrease the price of houses in the community and to help lower rents. I doubt we will see that in the budget. This is not people dreaming this stuff. They have been told by local members and others that the government will fix this stuff. I fear this, too, will be another broken promise.

Hon Michael Mischin: It is a fear. Where is your evidence that it is broken?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: It is an ever-growing list. The motion is about the ever-growing list of broken promises and I fear that today we will know the truth and it will be another broken promise. The people in Tom Price and Onslow have been led to believe that they will get assistance with land release. Local members and others have told them that they will get this. I think today this budget will reveal another broken promise; they will not get this at fault. People in the Kimberley and throughout the region appreciate the Country Age Pension Fuel Card and had heard promises, whether from Liberals or the National Party, that it would be increased, yet we already know that will not be the case. In South Hedland today a litre of unleaded petrol is \$1.679 and in Port Hedland probably \$1.659. It is expensive. The fuel cards provide only \$500 a year, but this increase would help people. It would lower the pressure on people in the regions, yet we have already seen that it is a broken promise. How many more broken promises will we have?

People in the goldfields raise the issue of relief to small businesses, yet already in this place, only a few weeks ago, this government voted against lowering the tax burden and helping people in small business. We have already seen this promise broken. This is not the media or the Labor Party making this up. People on the opposite side of the chamber made these promises during the election period or in the last few months and they have broken them. We are not making this up. The Premier is wrong to say it is the media. It is of his doing. He made these promises and now he has broken them and he will probably break more.

I spoke to people in Broome recently who are hoping for \$19 million out of today's budget to provide headwork for a new industrial precinct outside the community. This money will allow Broome to be put in a prime position

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to be a supply base for the Browse gas facility. This is the Browse project that we have already lost onshore and the Kimberley will lose out on. This \$19 million will allow them to at least be a supply base to get some of the benefits and to ensure the local community and businesses will benefit from Browse even though it is offshore. This has been promised—nudge-nudge, wink-wink—by ministers, parliamentary secretaries, visiting politicians and local members. I fear this \$19 million will not be in today's budget, and yet again this will be another broken promise to add to the ever-growing list.

People in Karratha are hoping for dollars in this budget and funding for a significant CBD upgrade in that town and for the hospital. Will we see that in the budget today? We might see some of it. But again this stuff was promised to people. Whether through a nudge-nudge, wink-wink or through Liberal Party or National Party policy statements, this stuff was promised to people. People in the community are expecting it, but we will see it added to our list of broken promises today.

I am conscious of time, but I want to talk about another broken promise that is dear to me that relates to workers in the public sector. Last year the Premier was asked about forced redundancies and job cuts—whatever we have in the public sector. He was quite strong on this. He said that essentially it would not happen. The government had not planned for it, and people in the public sector could be confident that they would be fine. Yet what do we see? We see another backflip. We see that 1 000 workers in the public sector will lose their jobs. At this stage the government states they are voluntary redundancies, but we know that is not the case; 1 000 workers in the system will lose their jobs. We also know that some of those positions are in front-line services. In my region, we have vacancies in agencies such as the Department for Child Protection and Family Support. We will lose staff. People from Wyndham last week told me that a senior officer in their department had told them that they should apply for voluntary redundancies because their jobs are going. It is outrageous. It is shameful. People on that side of the house should be ashamed of this list of broken promises. They said one thing, the electorate believed them and now they have backtracked.

HON COL HOLT (South West — Parliamentary Secretary) [11.07 am]: I rise to make a brief contribution to the motion. It is interesting that the motion is about an ever-growing list of broken promises. I missed the first part of the speech by the mover of the motion.

Hon Sue Ellery: That was the best bit.

Hon COL HOLT: Hon Sue Ellery may be able to correct me, but so far the debate has covered the delays in Fiona Stanley Hospital, forced local government authority amalgamations and the Verve–Synergy merger. I am not sure whether anything else was raised by members before Hon Steve Dawson.

Hon Sue Ellery: I also raised electricity prices. Other members have raised other things, but if you would like to go to brokenpromises.org.au, there are many there.

Hon COL HOLT: I will come to that.

Hon Ken Travers: We will get on to that in the next debate.

Hon COL HOLT: We should. I want to talk about that because it seemed to me that those issues raised at the beginning around Fiona Stanley Hospital and forced LGA mergers were effectively countered by the minister who spoke against them. I sat here thinking: where is the ever-growing list of broken promises? Then Hon Stephen Dawson stood up.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! This is a debate with limited speaking times, as members know, and it is very unfair to take up a member's time by successive interjections.

Hon COL HOLT: Hon Stephen Dawson stood and provided us with a list, not of broken promises, but of his fears of broken promises; we actually have not got to that yet. In his contribution he never actually delivered any evidence of broken promises. As an example, he said that he feared that the aged-care facility in Carnarvon would not be included in the budget. He also talked about land releases in Karratha, Tom Price and Paraburdoo et cetera, but a lot of that stuff is already happening. It has already begun and will continue, so I am not sure how those can be regarded as broken promises.

This government has been in office for four or five months now, and the opposition is trying to make up a list without any credible evidence for its claims of broken promises. We are on the cusp of a new budget, and I am hopeful, not fearful, that the election promises made by the National Party will be announced within the budget and delivered. I think we will continue to deliver for the regional constituents we represent, and we will continue to drive investment into regional Western Australia, as we have for the last four years. We know that the regions play a vital role in this state, and we will continue to support and invest in them.

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I was hopeful of coming along and hearing a debate about this ever-growing list, but so far we have not seen an ever-growing list, just three or four broken promises and a list of fears, so at this time I cannot support this motion.

HON LYNN MacLAREN (South Metropolitan) [11.11 am]: I want to make a couple of quick comments on behalf of the Greens. I appreciate the passion that has been expressed in this debate. I also want to flag to the government, on behalf of the citizens of the South Metropolitan Region, that there are extreme concerns about forced local government amalgamations. The City of Fremantle will meet with residents tonight to try to garner support for a better, amended version of the proposed amalgamations. I know that the City of Kwinana is also holding an event to counter what the Minister for Mental Health referred to as an “invitation”. That, I thought, was very interesting terminology; these local governments are apparently being “invited” to amalgamate in this particular way. I had hoped that the Barnett government would listen to the citizens of Western Australia, who are going to be speaking out, loud and proud, and hear what they are saying: they are not happy with these suggestions and they may well have other ideas of their own.

The Greens, as members know, are on record as saying that we support reform in the local government sector if it achieves better sustainability; we have not seen this thus far in the proposed boundary changes. In fact, one particular promise that this government made—to not force these amalgamations—now looks to be fitting this motion put forward today by Hon Sue Ellery on behalf of the Labor Party. It is the role of this house to examine whether promises made during the election campaign have been broken, and over the next four years we will continue to do that, despite what Hon Helen Morton said earlier today. Although the vote for the Liberal coalition was significant enough to take government, that does not give the government the right to do whatever it wants, against the expectations of the citizens of Western Australia. I believe that the citizens of Western Australia expect a government that listens to the community, and if the community says that the amalgamations proposed are not appropriate, the government needs to listen to the community. I commend the ALP for putting this motion on the notice paper today.

HON ALANNA CLOHESY (East Metropolitan) [11.14 am]: I, too, rise in support of this motion that the Legislative Council condemns the Liberal–National government for its ever-growing list of broken promises. I was just counting how long it has been since the last election, when some of these promises were made, and it is only about five months. I can count it on one hand, but it feels a lot longer than that because the list of broken promises grows every day. That is why it feels longer, but it is not long enough to have forgotten the reams of paper that were pushed through our letterboxes—the glossy pamphlets with the big red stamp that read, “Fully funded, fully costed”. It is not long enough to have forgotten the parchment-style personally addressed letters that appeared in our letterboxes almost every day. I am not sure why the letters were in parchment style; presumably it was to create the impression that the Liberal Party’s policies were professional, well managed, fully funded and fully costed. They were not. It is certainly not long enough to have forgotten those screechy television ads, all of which claimed that the government’s promises were fully funded and fully costed. Millions of dollars, in fact, was spent on advertising.

But we did not really have to wait that long, did we, to find out that none of those promises was fully funded; in fact, they were not even fully costed. It was more like, “We hope we might get the federal government to fund some of this, if not all of it, for us, but we haven’t been able to convince it yet and in fact, in some cases, we have not even asked it for funding yet”. That is the kind of thought-bubble planning process we are dealing with. Only today we found out that it means something else: not only is it not fully funded and not fully costed, but it is also on tick—sorry about that! Perhaps we could have another stamp made up—on tick; on the credit card.

One of the broken promises I particularly want to look at relates to my electorate of East Metropolitan Region. It was a significant, major promise affecting not only that region, but also all the traffic travelling to the goldfields and further. I refer to the Swan Valley bypass and Perth–Darwin highway. It is the major route to the north of the state and to the oil and gas projects on the coast, including both exploration and development projects. Consequently, traffic will only increase on that route. The member for Swan Hills, Mr Alban, thinks it is a really important road. He said that for some 20 years the Perth–Darwin highway had been just a dream, but that now it was becoming a reality. He said that it was a Liberal-led state government priority, with planning and design well underway, and work scheduled to start in 2014.

Hon Ken Travers: He broke a promise during the election!

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: I will get to that one! Next year is 2014. Indeed, during the election campaign the government promised \$196 million to finalise land acquisition and to look at the approvals processes. But it seems that the problem with that promise was that it was not fully funded and was not fully costed, because the government did not seem to have the money for it. It was not fully funded or fully costed, but nevertheless it was a high priority. It was such a high priority, in fact, that Mr Alban talked about it as being a no-brainer. He said

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that the national highway would become the main artery out of the region where all the state and federal government's wealth came from. He was reported in the *Echo News* as saying that it was a no-brainer, and that the project was vital, not just for safety, but for logistical reasons. However, only two months later, that no-brainer was in trouble because it had not been fully funded and fully costed.

I forgot this part; I need to go back a step. Two days before the election, the Under Treasurer, Tim Marney, told us that a total of \$3 billion in commonwealth government contributions was assumed as a funding source over the life of major infrastructure projects such as the MAX light rail, airport rail and—wait for it—the Perth–Darwin highway. What we got in our letterboxes told us that these projects were fully funded and fully costed, but they were on the tick and waiting for the commonwealth to say yes! Of course, the federal government came to the party in May. The federal Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Hon Anthony Albanese, said that the federal government would provide \$418 million—the lion's share of the Perth–Darwin highway project. He said that the federal government would provide \$418 million and that it had already been identified as a priority. Sadly though, we have to wait and find out whether the rest of that money will be provided and whether we will actually see it by 2014. I wait with bated breath about that in the same way I wait to hear about transport options for the people of Ellenbrook and Aveley.

Recently, I was talking to some young people who had just bought their first house in Ellenbrook; they are incredibly excited by it. We were looking at the footings of their house, the layout and design of their house—in fact, they are documenting every part of it! It seems I have to be part of that documentation, which is really exciting. They showed me everything to do with their house; they were very excited about not only their house, but being able to visit their friends, until I explained to them that their transport options in Ellenbrook were extremely limited, particularly on weekends.

When they signed their contract, they were under the impression that Ellenbrook would have a railway line. I had to explain that it would not be the case even though it had been promised in the election before last by the local member, Frank Alban; it still was not going to happen. The Premier had said it was not going to happen. They said it was really disappointing. I said that they could probably catch a bus.

Hon Ken Travers: Because there's going to be a bus rapid transit system, isn't there!

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Now, there will be a rapid bus transit system.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: That is what we are looking for now: a rapid bus transit system. But do not try —

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Look, I know it is very generous for other members to try to help the honourable member, but I am sure she is capable and wants to say what she wants to say, not what you want her to say.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Thank you, Mr President. The government is looking at a rapid bus transit system, but in the meantime I advised this couple not to try to catch a bus out of Ellenbrook on the weekends and certainly to make sure they have two hours to spare to wait for a bus during the week! They are just two examples of where fully funded, fully costed promises have been broken. I will try to keep an eye open on behalf of the constituents of East Metropolitan Region and a few others.

I hope that my friends in Ellenbrook get the opportunity to have a swim at the recreation centre because, of course, they have been promised a recreation centre and a swimming pool as part of the recreation hub. I also hope that they get to play basketball at Mundaring, if they can travel there. I further hope that some of the bike paths promised, particularly around the Perth–Midland and Bassendean–Midland rail station section come to fruition as promised this year.

I will just go back to the Ellenbrook recreation hub and the promise of some \$7 million to ensure the Ellenbrook sport precinct goes ahead, including a 50-metre swimming pool worth \$2 million and a sport and recreation centre worth \$5 million. I will be looking forward to that promise. In the meantime, if it is fully funded, fully costed but on the tick—I am sorry, it just does not work!

HON MICHAEL MISCHIN (North Metropolitan — Attorney General) [11.23 am]: I have listened to what has been said by the members of the opposition and the Greens in the course of this motion. So far as the Greens are concerned, although I can understand that there is a legitimate concern about their particular interest group, it must be said that they never have to worry about breaking promises because they never have to be put to the test of having to keep their promises. It was evidenced very much in the course of the last campaign that they were prepared to promise anything that might appeal to interest groups knowing that they would never be put to the

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test of having to find the money to do it, or have to balance it against the practicalities of what goes on on planet earth as opposed to planet green! I will say nothing more about that because it would be actually cruel to suggest that the appeal of their policies was such that it lost them two members representing the community in this place.

So far as the ALP is concerned, what was interesting was some of the comments about how this government won the right to be on the Treasury benches, and that it was promises alone that seemed to have influenced the electorate. I think that explains as much as anything why they are sitting on the other side of the house because, in fact, the electorate is interested in not only what direction a party is going to take the state and their interests if they are given the benefit of government, but also past performance. It was this government's stability and its achievements in the course of the previous four years that backed it up. We are not talking about an embarrassment of broken promises such as that there will be no carbon tax, or what was going to be done with boat people, and although I hesitate to suggest that what happens at the commonwealth level influences entirely what happens here, the ALP is a tainted party because it cannot be relied upon. The members of this community saw that and they saw that it would not promote the state's interest by having them in government.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Members, there are only a few minutes to go in this debate. It has been orderly for the most part, let us keep it that way.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Thank you, Mr President. Much of what has been said have been complaints that promises have not been kept and that aspirations, objectives and directions of government have not been fulfilled. We have been in government since the last election with a new alliance, with new members of cabinet and with new representatives in the electorate; it has been only five months. The opposition has not been able to point to anything that has not been achieved in my portfolio because I have been doing it.

Several members interjected.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I can point out what has been achieved to Hon Ken Travers, but I will save that for another debate. Compare that against the commitments that the ALP made during the course of the last election in law and justice: a sentencing council to agitate about sentences and a forum for complaints against judicial officers, which was something that the Law Reform Commission had been working on and is about to deliver a report on. That was its commitment to community concerns about security. It is no wonder that did not inspire anyone. At some point I will expand on what has been achieved and what was committed to and been done and is continuing to be done. Otherwise, the complaints about promises not being completed was largely evidenced by Hon Stephen Dawson, who seemed to have got all this fear that things are not going to be done. It is as if he expects the commitments are going to be achieved within a day of being elected!

Several members interjected.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: The commitments are ones that will be performed over a period of time in the next term of government, not the day after! I will just focus on one point in the time remaining. It was the idea about some commitment that no public servant would ever lose their job; that because there is a need for public servants in one area of government, the fact that others who are redundant to need somehow have their jobs preserved under all circumstances. That is just absurd. But it outlines the union-based philosophy of the opposition that what is good for the union is good for the rest of the state!

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: There are only 10 seconds to go, and it is unacceptable for multiple interjections of that nature.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Thank you, Mr President. In the last four seconds, I will say that I am confident this government will fulfil its commitments.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.