

PREMIER'S STATEMENT

Presentation

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe — Premier) [4.56 pm]: I rise today to provide the house with an outline of the Liberal–National government's policy and legislative priorities for the forthcoming year. In doing so I will take the opportunity to highlight some of what this government has achieved in its first 17 months in office.

As members are well aware, the first year of this government coincided with the global financial crisis. As a result, the government's priority has been to protect the state's finances against the impact of the economic downturn and make decisions that build confidence, attract investment, create jobs and set up the Western Australian economy for the long term. While the government will continue to hold a disciplined fiscal line and drive economic growth this year, it will increasingly focus on social and environmental policy. This had already begun with significant initiatives to improve community safety, transform mental health services, give greater independence to some of our public schools, improve water quality in the Swan and Canning Rivers and start work on a new children's hospital.

As members are well aware, 2009 ended on a devastating note for Toodyay after fire destroyed 38 homes on 29 December. Before I begin outlining the government's agenda I would like to take this opportunity to thank the volunteers and the many people from state government agencies who performed so admirably in responding to the fire both immediately and in the aftermath. It was a remarkable effort and we are all thankful for that. Despite the loss of homes and treasured possessions, no lives were lost.

I will briefly reflect on the state economy. Last year began with many of the world's major economies in recession and the Australian economy contracting. While the International Monetary Fund has revised up its growth forecasts for both Australia and the world for 2010, it warns that there are significant downside risks to global growth. Western Australia was not, and still is not, immune from the effects of the global financial crisis. Some people have lost jobs and houses and businesses have folded. We have experienced weaker than expected growth in gross state product, revenue from mining royalties and North West Shelf petroleum grants, and property taxes have declined significantly. This is a government that believes prudent financial management and strong economic growth provide the foundation from which we can best support the whole community.

The government has ensured that the state has retained its AAA credit rating. The state budget returned a surplus last year, one of only three states to do so. The state's economy is slowly recovering. Treasury forecasts modest growth of 2.25 per cent this year. While the economic outlook is improving, this does not immediately flow through to the state's finances, and maintaining a budget surplus will be a challenge. The Liberal–National government will continue to keep a tight rein on the state's finances and focus on delivering services more efficiently, effectively and fairly. Through the independent Economic Audit Committee the government has delivered on its election commitment to conduct a wide-ranging review of the operational and financial performance of the Western Australian public sector. This year it will start implementing recommendations contained in the committee's final report, including those that will drive reform in the social and community sector to ensure more effective delivery of support services.

While working hard to carefully manage the state's finances, the government has also concentrated on the bigger picture, driving economic development to sustain growth and prosperity into the future. Western Australia is now entering a new period of growth driven by government and private sector projects, including the Gorgon gas project—Australia's biggest resource project; the long-awaited second stage of the Ord River project, with work on irrigation and roads beginning in March–April this year; the Oakajee port and rail project in the Mid West, which will create the state's second major iron ore province and, with the development of a world-class industrial estate, provide opportunity for us to finally make more of our natural resources through value adding; and the Browse natural liquefied gas precinct in the Kimberley, which will capitalise on the massive Browse Basin gas reserves and give the Indigenous population of the Kimberley real opportunities for future prosperity, employment and self-determination.

The Liberal–National government has also committed to infrastructure projects in Perth that will revitalise the city. Work on sinking the rail line that has divided the central business district and Northbridge for more than 100 years is about to get underway. The bus station will also be sunk and a significant city square will be incorporated into a mix of residential and commercial development. Planning is underway for the long-awaited development of the Perth waterfront, which will see the Perth central business district embrace the city's greatest asset—the Swan River. The Liberal–National government's plans for the area between William and Barrack Streets will result in a people-friendly, attractive destination for families, city workers and national and international tourists. These twin projects will transform Perth and will reorientate the city in a north–south direction, linking Northbridge with the CBD and the CBD with the river. The Liberal–National government,

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

with the support of the City of Perth, is determined to make Perth a lively, sophisticated capital city befitting a state as important as Western Australia. Of course, if people living in and visiting Perth were also able to shop at night, Perth might be able to shake off the tag that it is a dull city, whether people believe the tag is fair or not. I hope members opposite will support the Retail Trading Hours Amendment Bill introduced into this house last year. That is about giving people in Perth the choice to shop after 6.00 pm on week nights—the freedom of choice available to people living in other towns and cities in Western Australia and throughout Australia and the world. This will be an important advancement as we head towards hosting several thousand people from more than 50 nations at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 2011.

The projects in regional Western Australia and Perth that I have just outlined are either underway or will start shortly. This has not happened by accident. It has happened because this government has worked tirelessly to make sure these projects have gone ahead and will go ahead. The Liberal–National government has opened the door to the private sector to encourage investment and minimise risk and declare that Western Australia is again one of the most viable and attractive places in which to do business. Make no mistake, Mr Speaker, we will not lose another Inpex. This government has streamlined approval processes and will this year progress legislation to further overhaul the approvals systems in the areas of planning, mining, environment and land development; reduced the backlog of mining tenement applications by more than one third; finalised more than twice the number of environmental appeals on proposals in 2009 than were finalised in the last full year of the Labor government; doubled the rate of planning approvals compared with the former government; begun the process of dramatically reducing the number of boards and committees, which I will advise the house of in the coming weeks; completed an investigation into how government can further minimise bureaucratic red tape on business and the community, the findings of which will be tabled in this place shortly; provided \$60 million for an exploration incentive scheme to encourage further mineral exploration; and established a regulatory framework to allow for uranium mining in Western Australia, overturning the nonsensical decision by the former government to ban uranium mining in the world’s leading mining economy.

Western Australia is fortunate to have one of the world’s great gas and mineral resource endowments. The state’s mineral resources are owned by the people of Western Australia. The state government, on behalf of the people, receives royalties from the companies that mine resources. I would remind all members that these royalties are not a tax. Any suggestion that a tax review by the commonwealth government will result in the replacement of state royalties with a new federal resources rent tax demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of the royalties system. The Liberal–National government will not hand over the sovereignty of our natural resources by forfeiting Western Australia’s right to charge a price for the sale of the mineral resources that we own. Because of our dominant position as a mining state, a federal government resource rent tax on mining would effectively be a tax on Western Australia. I trust that members opposite will put aside their political allegiances and support the Liberal–National government on this critically important issue should the Rudd Labor government pursue the changes proposed. If ever there was an issue worth fighting for about the state’s rights, this is it.

In the same vein, I would also hope that members opposite will set aside their close ties to union powerbrokers to ensure that industrial relations does not become a battleground in our resources sector as a result of changes to the industrial relations system that is now under the jurisdiction of the federal government. Quite simply, neither this state nor this country can afford to signal to the world that investment in Australia’s resource industry is now less secure because of the threat of unjustified strikes and work stoppages; 1970s-style industrial relations disputes will jeopardise jobs and livelihoods.

As members are well aware, the majority of our mineral resources, and consequently our wealth, come from the Pilbara region. The Liberal–National government recognises that it has a responsibility to improve the living conditions of people in the Pilbara and to support the thousands of people living and working in the towns that support our economic development. This government has committed \$300 million to create liveable cities and communities in the state’s north, including Karratha, Port Hedland, Newman, Tom Price and Onslow. This funding is provided for a major land release push, replanning towns, apartment-style residential developments, undergrounding powerlines and upgrading power capacity.

The Liberal–National government recognises that agriculture continues to be a key to the state’s economic success and will promote growth in the productivity and profitability of the agricultural sector. This government has proceeded cautiously on the issue of genetically modified crops. After successful trials, the growing of GM canola is now allowed in Western Australia, just as it is in New South Wales and Victoria. We also look forward to the opening of the Muchea saleyards, which was progressed by the Liberal–National government after delays under the former government. This is a government that is not Perth-centric; it focuses on the needs of all Western Australians and the communities in which they live. The successful royalties for regions programs is testament to that.

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

Local government also plays an important role in the delivery of services. Waste management, libraries and park management are just a few of those services. Members will be aware that this government firmly believes that Western Australians will be better served by having fewer local governments and that it has committed to reducing the number of councils from 139 to fewer than 100 over the next five years. This measure has been controversial, but the government believes that the communities throughout Perth and regional Western Australia will get a better level of service from local governments with greater economies of scale and shared resources. To date, 11 councils have indicated a willingness to amalgamate and are working with the government to make this a reality.

Mr P. Papalia: Make that 10.

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not wish to interrupt the Premier's Statement. Members in this place will get an opportunity to respond and I suggest that that will be a more appropriate time than now. Member for Warnbro, I formally call you for the second time.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Events, festivals, cultural and arts activities add much to the fabric of our communities. Over the coming months, the government will examine ways to support a variety of events throughout the state. Our effort, support and assistance needs to be well targeted. This is as much about attracting visitors to Western Australia as it is about making communities more vibrant for local Western Australians, not just in Perth but in towns and cities throughout the state.

The health of our communities is also linked to the health of our natural environment. The increased development activity that I have spoken about means a commensurate increase in our responsibility to ensure that the environment is protected for future generations. Western Australians demand that government strike the right balance between development and environmental protection. The Liberal-National government is committed to doing exactly that. The government has strengthened the independence of the Environmental Protection Authority to enable it to better deal with the increasing complexity and size of development projects in this state. These projects require the highest level of environmental scrutiny, assessment and conditions to ensure that we not only drive long-term economic benefits but also that our unique environment is properly protected.

The Kimberley region is one of Western Australia's most diverse and special natural environments. The Liberal-National government came to power with a commitment to protect the Kimberley, and this will be a major focus in 2010. A marine park at Camden Sound will be established, which will protect a key nursery of the world's largest humpback whale population, and the Kimberley science and conservation strategy will be finalised. This will determine how we will balance economic development and opportunities for Indigenous advancement with conservation of the region's unique environmental and cultural values.

This year the government will also focus on raising community awareness of our national parks. Last year Dirk Hartog Island became the state's ninety-eighth national park. The government will work towards improving access and making available better accommodation, including affordable family holidays within and near our major national parks.

The Liberal-National government has joined with the federal government to nominate the Ningaloo coast for World Heritage listing in recognition of that area's natural beauty, biological richness and international significance. If listed, the Ningaloo coast will be recognised with the greatest of the World Heritage sites.

On the renewable energy front, the government has provided \$12.5 million towards the development of a demonstration wave power station near Garden Island. This technology has the capability of converting wave energy into zero emission electricity.

A continual challenge in our drying climate is the management of water and land use. The Liberal-National government is taking steps to protect the Gngangara groundwater system north of Perth, which has long been a major source of drinking water and supports significant wetlands and groundwater-dependent ecosystems.

The former Labor government squandered many opportunities to share the benefits of the boom of the previous decade. It is a travesty that the spoils of that economic providence were enjoyed by too few Western Australians and too many were left behind. The Liberal-National government recognises that it has a great responsibility to ensure the opportunities in front of us are not wasted. As Premier, I am determined that not only do we make decisions to ensure sustained growth but also the benefits of a strong economy are shared with all Western Australians.

Our hospital system will undergo a massive transformation as we expand the capacity of our health system with new and redeveloped hospitals. As announced just two days ago, the new children's hospital on the Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre site will begin construction in 2012 and be ready for patients in early 2015. This

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

year the government will progress the Royal Perth Hospital Protection Bill, which will ensure that Perth retains a central city hospital with an emergency department and research capacity. The Liberal–National government has started construction of Fiona Stanley Hospital. The 643-bed hospital will be completed in December 2013. Planning continues for the redevelopment of Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital, which will begin construction in mid-2011. Construction of the new Albany hospital will begin early next year and be completed by the end of 2012. The Midland health campus, replacing Swan District Hospital, will provide a new modern facility for the eastern suburbs of Perth, and construction will be underway in 2012.

We are getting on with the job in health. In doing so, we are not only looking at new and redeveloped hospitals but also improving the delivery of services in our hospitals. Last year the government started implementing a four-hour rule in metropolitan and regional hospitals throughout the state. The aim is to ensure that 98 per cent of patients arriving at emergency departments are seen and admitted, discharged or transferred within four hours. All metropolitan and regional hospitals will move to the four-hour rule this year.

The Liberal–National government has injected an extra \$30 million over two years into reducing waitlists. In 2009, a record number of 75 254 cases of elective surgery were carried out—2 300 more than the previous year. The challenges of delivering a quality health service in a state the size of Western Australia are significant. The Liberal–National government has made practical decisions to improve access to health services throughout regional Western Australia. This government recognises that the Royal Flying Doctor Service is very much more than an “interest group”, as it was so dismissively described by the former Labor government. The Liberal–National government has provided \$65 million over five years for additional aircraft and crews for the Royal Flying Doctor Service. To further assist Western Australians living in remote, rural and regional areas of the state to gain access to quality medical services, the Liberal–National government has invested \$7.5 million extra funding each year for the patient assisted travel scheme.

Education and Training: The responsibility for educating our young people is perhaps the most important role for state governments, which provide around 90 per cent of the funding for public schools. The Liberal–National government is committed to improving our schools and educational standards across the state. We demonstrated this by settling the long-running teachers’ pay dispute with an immediate and much-deserved six per cent pay rise for teachers in the first weeks after coming to office. Last year the Liberal–National government made a historic leap forward in public education with the announcement that the 2010 school year would begin with a number of government schools having independent status. More than 100 schools applied to become independent public schools. This response demonstrates that school communities are eager to be involved in decision making at the local level. Thirty-four schools started term 1 this year with more autonomy and more power to make decisions that best suit the needs of their students and local communities. This year, more schools will be given the chance to apply to become independent public schools for the start of the 2011 school year. The Liberal–National government is supporting schools to create positive learning environments for students. The government has allocated \$46 million to improve student behaviour, including providing all schools with access to chaplains and school psychologists. Work on six new behaviour centres in regional towns and cities is underway, and the centres are on track to open this year.

A skilled workforce is essential to underpinning the state’s economic growth. The government last year established a stand-alone Department of Training and Workforce Development to improve training, apprenticeship and retraining opportunities for Western Australians. By 2012, there will be more than 47 000 people in training and apprenticeships, which is 10 000 more than at the highest point under the previous government. Part of the transformation of the training system also involves re-branding and refocusing TAFE colleges as specialist training centres in areas of particular importance to the Western Australian economy, such as tourism.

Social Responsibility: I made reference earlier to this government’s commitment to ensuring that the benefits that flow from the next period of sustained economic growth in Western Australia are shared by all Western Australians. The success of the Liberal–National government will be measured not only by economic growth but by how well we translate that growth into support and quality services for the wider community. As leader of the government, I am determined that, by these measures, we will not fail the people of Western Australia. We live in a prosperous society; the future for this state looks bright. Most Western Australians share in the success, but not all. The mark of a civilised and compassionate society is the way in which we care for those who are less advantaged and less able to benefit from our success. We all share this social responsibility. This is a compassionate government. This is a government that recognises that it is not always best placed to deliver the services required by those who need help. The Liberal–National government trusts the community sector—the many hundreds of non-government organisations that work every day to provide effective services and excellent care to many thousands of Western Australians who need support. This government will demonstrate that trust by doing two very important things differently: reducing the regulatory burden imposed on non-government

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

agencies, which sees too much money and time being spent on administration rather than practical service delivery; and progressively shifting the delivery of services away from government agencies to the community sector. We will ensure services are delivered by people “on the ground”—volunteers, families, carers, support organisations and non-government agencies—because they are better placed to understand and meet the needs of vulnerable people. This is not about cutting jobs in the public service; this is about getting the best possible service for those most in need.

Some of the practical initiatives already put in place by the Liberal–National government in this area include supporting seniors in the community through the cost-of-living rebate, the Country Age Pension Fuel Card and free public transport; providing more social housing to help people move along the path between homelessness and homeownership; expanding residential care for children; and more funding for disability services and a change to government policy so government agencies no longer have to go to public tender when there is an opportunity to award work to people with a disability.

This year the government will continue to make decisions that improve the lives of people in our community in practical ways, such as amending the Children and Community Services Act to allow for special guardianships, to provide a safe and stable environment for children in foster care; expanding parenting services to regional areas; and opening a respite centre for carers of people with disabilities in Broome and planning for similar facilities in Joondalup and Rockingham.

Mr Speaker, a priority of this government since coming to office has been to improve the mental health system in Western Australia. The Liberal–National government is leading the way in mental health, with the appointment of the state’s first mental health minister and the establishment of Australia’s first Mental Health Commission next month. We are placing mental health where it needs to be—separate from the wider health administration. The mental health commissioner will have responsibility for all mental health services within hospitals and community-based services.

Mental illness can often be exacerbated by illicit drugs, including cannabis. Cannabis is not a harmless or so-called “social” drug. Research continues to show that it can lead to a host of health and mental health problems, and can be a gateway to harder drugs. Last year the government introduced the Cannabis Law Reform Bill and will look to have that legislation passed in the first half of this year so that the former Labor government’s soft-on-drugs laws can be repealed. This government’s legislation will reinstate the one-time cautioning system for possession, and provide for new possession limits and tougher penalties. People will no longer be able to —

The SPEAKER: Premier, I am sorry about this. Member for Girrawheen, I have told this house before that everybody will have an opportunity to speak to the statement. That does not indicate that you need to continually speak about every element of the statement. I formally call you for the second time.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

People will no longer be able to grow up to two cannabis plants and not be prosecuted. However, the government also recognises the existence of a criminal record has a serious impact on a person’s future job prospects. So, the legislation will allow for a person convicted of minor cannabis possession offences to apply to have a spent conviction after three years.

The changes to cannabis laws are a first step in the Liberal–National government’s fight to reverse eight years of irresponsible drug policy. This year the government will complete a review of the Misuse of Drugs Act and introduce legislation for harsher penalties for drug dealers who sell or supply illicit drugs to children, make it an offence to expose children to harm from the manufacture of illegal drugs, and ban the sale of drug use paraphernalia.

Law and Order: Mr Speaker, much of the legislation before the Western Australian Parliament last year was related to improving community safety in this state. There was a clear message at the last election that Western Australians were tired of the soft-on-crime approach to law and order under the previous government. They were tired of criminals being given an automatic one-third discount off their sentences under so-called truth in sentencing. They were tired of people assaulting police officers without serious consequences. They were tired of hoons and graffiti vandals blighting their community. Western Australians gave this government a mandate at the 2008 election to reduce antisocial behaviour and crime in this state. We have accepted that challenge and the results so far are positive. In the first full year of this government there was an 8.5 per cent drop in overall reported offences against the person and property. This means there were 18 000 fewer offences under this government last year than in the previous year.

While these figures are encouraging, there were still increases in some areas of crime such as assaults. There is much more to do to reduce antisocial and criminal behaviour in our community. Legislation will give courts the

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

power to make prohibited behaviour orders and give police stronger stop-and-search powers, which is important given the prevalence of weapons and crime in this state. In 2009, 3 773 weapons were found when offences against a person were committed. Police say this is just the tip of the iceberg.

The maximum penalty for graffiti offences has been doubled, and it is now an offence for retailers to sell graffiti implements to minors. The government has also reinstated the Graffiti Taskforce. The penalties for hooning, throwing rocks at vehicles and arson have all been increased. The Liberal–National government will also target organised crime, with the introduction of anti-association legislation aimed at groups who come together to engage in criminal behaviour. We will also broaden the powers of the Corruption and Crime Commission in this area.

The government's hard line on law and order is not only confined to legislation. Since coming to office, the government has employed an additional 120 police officers, and the first intake of auxiliary police officers will happen in the next few months. The government is on track to deliver on its election commitment of 500 additional police personnel and 200 expert civilian staff over five years. The Perth police complex is underway, and country police stations closed by the previous government have been reopened.

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Members opposite can laugh.

The government is also investing \$655 million to deliver more than 1 600 additional prisoner beds across the Western Australian prison system, and work has started on a rehabilitation facility for 18 to 20-year-old offenders.

We do not apologise for taking high-risk offenders off our streets, and we are committed to investing in our prison system through dramatically increased infrastructure and proper education, employment and rehabilitation programs to help break the cycle of recidivism.

I believe the record of the Liberal–National government to date shows that it is not afraid to make hard decisions in the interests of all Western Australians. We have a responsibility to all members of our community. While the government is committed to helping people help themselves, it recognises that not everyone has the same capacity to lead better or more prosperous lives on their own. That is why the Liberal–National government will focus on empowering those who have been neglected, hurt or marginalised to live with dignity, confidence and security. Social justice will be a hallmark of the Liberal–National government.

The government's commitment to considered reform will build stronger communities throughout the state. This will be achieved through both policy and legislation. I look forward to a year of robust and informed debate in the Parliament this year. It incumbent upon all members to take seriously the responsibility of framing laws that shape the way we live in Western Australia. I wish all members well for the 2010 parliamentary year.

Consideration

The SPEAKER: The question is —

That the Premier's Statement be noted.

I call the member for Willagee!

MR P.C. TINLEY (Willagee) [5.29 pm]: I am proud to rise this afternoon for the first time as the member for Willagee and present myself to this chamber. But in soaking up the atmosphere in this place and reflecting on my personal journey, I cannot help but feel like something of an accidental politician in comparison with the collective experience of all members in this place. I feel humbled, but similarly challenged, to be amongst the members.

Of course, we all occupy our seats by the good grace of our constituents, and I thank the electors of Willagee for their gift. It is to them that I affirm my sincere commitment to a full-throated advocacy on their behalf. I also acknowledge and thank my predecessor, Alan Carpenter, whose true worth to Willagee will be known most intimately by the scores of individuals, schools and community groups he worked for and helped over 13 years.

The electorate of Willagee could be described as a pastiche of suburbs hemmed by bitumen ribbons in a neat box of working Australia. As an older area of Perth, Willagee has a large number of handsome parks not normally found in a modern subdivision. On any given weeknight or weekend these parks host a bewildering array of sporting and community events. The streetscape is decorated by wide verges and old peppermint trees. However, the built environment belies the soul of what Willagee has to offer to people of all backgrounds. The activity of Willagee is typical of suburban life, and its people are making their own way and improving their lot. With over 33 per cent of my constituents living in public housing, the challenges are not insignificant. While equity of

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

access to the opportunities for self-improvement is a challenge to some in Willagee, the great advantage they all share is actually where they live. Willagee is not the sum of its parks and buildings; it is the invisible connections within it that form its soul.

I have had the great privilege of growing up around this district, and in campaigning for this seat have met and been influenced by the sense of community fostered by some seemingly invisible people. While it is grossly unjust to those unnamed, I think it worthy, by way of example, to honour a few people who create Willagee: the Hilton Residents Association led by Mary Barton and Dave Hume, who are tireless in their efforts to improve community; as are Senior Constables Ian Abercrombie and Ian Hill, who are leaders and examples for some of our most challenged youth in the operation of the Hilton Police and Citizens Youth Centre. Similarly, Willagee Alive is a dynamic activist group exploring every opportunity to coordinate events and building community. Individuals such as Brenda Pittman and the committee of the Willagee Bears Rugby League Club have been quietly building the club and now have over 300 registered players. Brenda's efforts, I am pleased to report, have been recognised this Australia Day with the award of Melville's Australian of the Year. People like Brenda and local JP, Kathy Heath, who herself has been an activist for good community in Willagee for over 40 years, are emblematic of the invisible human "super highway" of our community.

Apart from the constituents of Willagee, a number of people, have assisted me on my path to this place today. I would like to thank Bill Johnston who, since I joined the party in 2001, spared little in the candour of his advice or support. The irony is not lost on me that I make this speech alongside him today as a colleague. I am also deeply thankful for the personal commitment and advice of Kim Beazley. Even with a punishing number of responsibilities, Kim found time for long chats in the white wicker chairs of his front veranda, where he provided context for me on many issues based on his long personal history in politics in this state and the nation. I consider him to be one of this state's great political exports. Similarly, I acknowledge and personally thank Joe Bullock and Dave Kelly who patiently assisted my education in the role of organised labour in the advocacy of workers' rights, and through them the tangible assistance of the trade union movement in support of my election.

I would also like to thank the very professional campaign team I had around me. It is a fact that while inconvenient to any party, by-elections are a great opportunity for the membership and the faithful to unify for a common cause. It was also my privilege to have the pick of some great campaign staff. None less than the state secretary of the ALP, Simon Mead, was available as director and, like his predecessor, he shows a capacity for focussed strategy that would be the envy of any candidate. The daily tactical battle was tirelessly managed by Charlene Farmer and Steve Dawson and supported by Alanna Clohesy, Liz Phillips and my good friends Chris Davis and David Michael, who found time after hours, at night and weekends to provide professional support. The hundreds of volunteers who worked on the campaign and are not mentioned today are no less thanked for their contribution. Together they form that unique constituent group called the Labor Party, and I will strive to meet their aspirations for our party.

While this professional contribution provided an armchair ride, I am most indebted to my family for their support. I would like to acknowledge my father and stepmother, John and Lucy Tinley, who are here today, and record the great affection I have for them and the quiet, unstinting support they have provided. I would also like to recognise my wife's parents, Max and Judy Speedy, who have travelled from Victoria to witness this family occasion. Now, like all men in this chamber, I would like to think of myself as no man's fool, but given the grief we create for our families, perhaps the truth of the matter is that we are actually a good woman's folly. So with this in mind, I reserve my deepest thanks for my wife, Vicki, whose love for her family seems boundless. She not only provides routine to our family, but also leads her own businesses and even finds time to tend to the pretensions of her husband. My sons, Oliver and Elliott, who I am proud to say are here today without their iPods, and Angus, who cannot be with us today, are the true beneficiaries of her commitment. I am privileged to be able to have recorded for all time my deepest love for her support.

I opened my speech this afternoon with the idea that I am something of an accidental politician. In the evolution of politics in this country we have seen the rise of what can be described as a separate professional class called politician. Long gone are the days when citizens occupied a seat in this place as an extracurricular activity to their daily life as a tradesman, merchant or pastoralist. This is not to suggest that those in this chamber who have come from a background of service to party or politics are less worthy of the honour of representation; in fact, the rise of the professional political stream aligns with the ever-growing body of statutes and their supervising departments. Those professionally versed in the negotiation of this bureaucratic labyrinth are essential for effective government. Clearly, I do not come from this heritage. At 47 years of age I have already enjoyed 25 years as a career soldier and several more in that adventure described as "business owner". With this background some have suggested that I actually wandered into the wrong branch meeting 10 years ago. In fact, it has also been said that any self-respecting businessman who has also taken the Queen's shilling could surely not throw his lot in with the socialists! Forgive me if I take this as an accusation of the depth of my conviction to

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

Labor values. A cursory examination of my life may in fact provide some support to the charge. As a son of a company manager hailing from a riverside suburb with all the privilege afforded a middle-class lifestyle, there appears to be little Labor evidence. I do not hail from those heroic Labor backgrounds embodied in a Chifley or a Curtin. I am not the son of a train driver, nor a coalminer or a lumper; neither have I manned the picket lines for workers' rights—yet.

So what was the accident? Uniformed service was one of my great privileges and the longer I served, the more I appreciated Donald Horne's ironic descriptor for Australia, "the lucky country". In my service I have witnessed the tenuous grip any individual or community has over its freedoms, in such places as Lebanon and Syria while seconded as a United Nations military observer. I have seen the utter desperation of life in Afghanistan and Iraq where the tools of freedoms such as health and education are an illusion reserved for the ruling classes. Although it is a long bow to draw any direct correlation between those experiences and the lucky country, what was not lost on me was that individual freedoms are always taken too lightly until they are lost. The right to feel secure, to grow personally through self-determined expression and the right to equal access to all of society's opportunities are not an automatic gift of any people. Vigilance over these rights is in my estimation resident in only one political party in this country—the Labor Party. The advancement of all Australians is the very foundation of Labor and this tradition has not diminished in the modern ALP today. The challenges to equity are less obvious than past historic achievements such as wage entitlement, inclusion of the first Australians, universal free education and health care but are no less important. As we are constantly challenged by a dynamic world in areas such as population growth, climate change and finite resources, our way of life will require the careful stewardship of all sides of politics, but it is the equity of access that is in the DNA of the ALP and it is this above all else that allows me to find an easy home with Labor.

Nothing supports equity of opportunity more than a strong steady economy. It is often remarked that the state must broaden its economic base and bridge the troughs buttressed by successive resource cycles. These economic troughs always just keep on giving even after we herald the end of the crisis and the advent of the new boom. The human expression of this lag between cycles is never more present than with the unemployed. The 2010 Australian Bureau of Statistics figures for January show that in the South Metropolitan Region alone there are 4 000 more unemployed people than this time last year. Given that the resource sector in this state accounts for over \$71 billion and employs directly and indirectly one in five Western Australians, any counter-cyclical economic activity will be a support act at best, but that does not mean we should give up and allow the rest of this country to ride on the back of every Western Australian until this particular boom is over. We have allowed the notion to develop on the east coast that we are just a quarry with a "rip it, dig it and ship it" mentality, and when it gets tough to deliver services in Western Australia, such as health and education—the very symbol of any state's prosperity—we simply revert to the golden goose to see if we can squeeze it one more time. When the party is over and the north west is a sea of empty donga camps surrounding derelict, rusting machinery at the bottom of some very big holes, where will we go? What will be the great driver that will offer opportunities to our children and grandchildren that we have enjoyed? Where is the vision?

At this point I should record that my comments are not an accusation levelled at the resource sector; they are not. In fact I refer to the resource base of this state and the companies that have pioneered its development as a pathfinder for a sustainable economic future. The entrepreneurial courage of the resource sector, from Paddy Hannan through to Lang Hancock and Andrew Forrest, along with institutional commitment from the Rio Tintos, the BHP Billitons and the Gorgon partners, are examples of what is possible. It is not Hobson's choice when it comes to economic growth for Western Australia—a case of either the resource sector or nothing—but a case of the resource sector as well as anything and everything else that we want. To be clear: this is not a pollyanna view of the challenge. If it was easy to broaden the economic base, we would have done it by now. We are not in this chamber, in this place, on this day, to do the easy. We are guardians and drivers of this state and are expected to find ways to get the hard tasks done. I also know that we become what we say we want to be and if we do not speak the ambition, if we do not profess to be something more than we are imagined by others, if we do not plan and play in that vision, then we will never arrive at any destination. The statement for this ambition needs to be a comprehensive strategic plan for industry.

What is clear about the size of the resource sector is that any economic broadening will not be the product of market forces. Any business in this state that does not covet a direct or indirect slice of the resource sector has no comprehension of market drivers. The majority of new capital is naturally drawn to the resource sector projects. Those projects have delivered handsomely, for some. At six times the size of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme, the Gorgon project is Australia's largest ever; clearly an economic whale by any name but seemingly not so for fabricators in this state. The cost of importing 25 000 tonnes of steel fabrication to the Gorgon project alone will be about 2 000 jobs. Although that is an obscene slap in the face to the Western Australian manufacturing sector, it is fair warning that global shifts in traditional manufacturing continue at

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

pace. We need to look beyond and create the “industry after next” to ensure we have a differential advantage for Western Australia. That is not to say traditional sectors should be abandoned; in fact the absence of a comprehensive industry strategy for our state should support local content in the first instance. As a sidebar, I find spurious at best the view expressed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade that any legislated remedy for preferential purchasing may contravene international trade treaties—they do not. The US seems to have no problem with their Buy American Act.

If we seek a self-determined future and say so, where is the plan? I looked for statements and policies on economic vision for Western Australia. Although a number of policies exist for industry sectors and key initiatives in innovation, Western Australia is bereft of any comprehensive industry policy. It is in this place, where vision is required, that we appear to be missing in action. The stark truth is that when it comes to a comprehensive industry policy much is said, some done, but little achieved. We can all point to great initiatives such as the Bentley Technology Park, the Australian Marine Complex and the newly launched floating dock as examples of vision, and that they are, but they are not expressions of a wide ambition encompassing all that has made Western Australia the grand state and all that is possible for our future.

I come from a professional tradition that holds out strategic planning and tactical execution as the two greatest skills any individual can have. When well led, a strong strategic plan will provide any complex organisation with the agility needed to react to threats and opportunities in the markets in which we choose to operate. Make no mistake, we are in clear competition with our own. In response to the declining traditional manufacturing sector, Victoria has gone a long way in the release of its plan called “Building Our Industries for the Future”. This plan, released in 2008, has been the product of many years of investigation and consultation but now provides the strategy under which operational initiatives can be executed. More directly comparable, Queensland’s Smart State Strategy, in operation since 2005, has the deliberate ambition to build industry away from the traditional resource sector. Both these plans identify a limited window in which to establish a presence in new and emerging industries. We either benefit from the returns available as an early mover—or at least as a fast follower—or risk being just one of the herd living off the scraps on the tracks made by others. The clock is well and truly ticking.

Where the spark of innovation meets the flinty determination of good leadership, opportunity will flow. For example, in terms of intensity and duration of sunlight, Tasmania’s darkest day is Germany’s brightest, yet Germany is the recognised world leader in solar technology. Why? Vision and leadership. Perth is the second-windiest city in the world, yet we have fewer wind turbines per head of population than any other OECD—Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development—country. We have the hottest stable rock formations and the most active tides, but we are just tinkering in the back shed when it comes to development of these industries.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mr P.C. TINLEY: The renewable energy sector is one in which we can create complementary advantage alongside the strength of the resources sector. What are the needs of this growing sector that can be leveraged for renewable energy? I do not pretend to know the answer but I do know the people who do. The momentum in the renewable energy sector is small but growing. The growth of the sector’s industry body, the Western Australian Sustainable Energy Association, from a membership of fewer than 50 businesses in 2002 to nearly 300 today, makes it Australia’s largest industry body and is evidence of the resident knowledge and ambition already available. All the industry needs is a government that has a vision and a plan to support it. The Australian Marine Complex is a good example of the value of a bricks and mortar expression around which industry can congregate. I suggest that the same needs to be done urgently for the renewable energy sector. A reasonably placed tract of land such as the Latitude 32 industrial estate in Naval Base with its access to transport infrastructure and heavy industry would be ideal for the exclusive use of the renewable energy sector. It would form the focal point for government and industry to come together to provide support to emergent industries, with particular emphasis on the resource sector. Of course this suggestion is only one requirement of a comprehensive industry strategy but it demonstrates the relationship and opportunity of integration across industry sectors. It is only a question of leadership.

My comments about the absence of a strategy speak to the heart of what I believe is the essential requirement of any Parliament—that of leadership. As a long-term observer of leadership and politics, I have detected a decline in the prestige of Parliament and a loss of respect for parliamentarians, not because of the endless, sometimes petty, combat between the protagonists. In my estimation, adversarial tension is an expectation that the public has in order to truly represent a democratic outcome. The fading of prestige I speak of is not the “legislative sausage making” but the deeper concern for a collective leadership that provides relevance to their lives with a grand idea of who we are as a people.

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

Before the press gallery runs away with any whimsical notion around a challenge to the leadership of my party or a commentary on the leadership of any other party, my comments are directed at the collective leadership of the body corporate called Parliament. This is a leadership that is not defined by one person nor one party backed by this entire Parliament. I am speaking about the collective responsibility we all take for constructing a strong, confident society by leading and shaping consensus, rather than continually playing to the populist base fears of our people. The continual claims of how bad things are in our community has as its price the creation of unreasonable fear. The harder road to follow is a path of authentic leadership that builds consensus on what is possible, not on what is wrong. Solution, not a problem; options, not fault; and hope, not fear—this is authentic leadership.

Authentic leadership is an academically recognised style best described by my very good friend Jim Phillipps in his thesis on leadership. Simply put, authentic leaders do not shy from the truth of a matter, and have the courage to align the spirit of their actions with the spirit of their words. Authentic leadership provides intellectual transparency for those we wish to influence, change and have follow us. If not, then we become the followers, or as the French revolutionary Ledru-Rollin more aptly said, “There go the people. I must follow them for I am their leader.”

One of the key issues that emerged during the Willagee campaign was that of community safety and the level of crime and antisocial behaviour. There was considerable anger at this government for closing down the Hilton Police Station at the beginning of the by-election in favour of a hub strategy for police services. While I disagree with the logic of centralised policing, I recognise the government’s prerogative to try it. What I cannot condone is the statement about how serious this government is about community safety, yet its only tool is the stick. Authentic leadership recognises the systemic contribution social disadvantage has on crime and does not shy from the harder task of redressing it. Community-based mentor programs for at-risk youth, stronger allocation of resources to youth sport, properly resourced prisoner rehabilitation programs and mandated organised sport in our public schools are long, slow fights, difficult to lead but with sustained dividend for all.

We are not authentic with our constituents if we do not explain that, even when the city is littered with metal detectors and we have built more prisons than schools, there will still be crime. Until we have the guts to really level with them and build consensus for deep and sustained programs that provide generational change, we have failed our people and diminished each and every one of us and the prestige of this place. I would not, myself, be authentic if I did not make myself clear on this particular topic, since I have singled it out. Extreme stop and search legislation and poorly executed anti-hoon laws are simply the toxic dividend of fear politics. I did not participate in two wars on the other side of the world to deliver democratic freedoms in those countries to see them whittled away in my own home.

Several opposition members: Hear, hear!

Mr P.C. TINLEY: The slow incremental denial of our freedoms, while innocent enough now, are simply inoculation against future privations. I caution us all now with the saying, “Evil prospers when good men do nothing”, and the victimisation of just one innocent person is a price too high, in my estimation, because it never stops at one.

In matters of leadership I simply say: leaders lead. If you call yourself a leader, then prove it. Every time the members of this place take the easy road of speaking to the ill-informed consensus, we are nothing more than followers. I prefer the adapted Christian saying, “If you were accused of being a leader, would there be enough evidence to convict you?” It is the opportunity to be part of the leadership of the grand and graceful state of Western Australia, my home, which I am most humbled by. Thank you.

[Applause.]

MS L.L. BAKER (Maylands) [5.52 pm]: I wish to make a few comments before the dinner break in response to the Premier’s Statement. I congratulate him on continuing an agenda that the Labor Party started in its last term; namely, to reduce the regulatory burden on the not-for-profit sector to make it far easier for that sector to do more of what it does very well; that is, serve the people of Western Australia. We started that agenda when we looked at a standard chart of accounts for the sector. Some of the agencies operate under 80 different contracts, all of which have different terms of reference, different auditing requirements, different reporting requirements and different accounting requirements and satisfy different degrees of transparency required by agencies across both federal and state governments. If the chart of accounts that those agencies report to can be reduced to one government standard, it would provide massive cost and time saving for them. Non-government organisations are already stretched to their limit delivering services to an ever-increasing number of people who need them—vulnerable people—who we heard the Premier mention tonight in his statement.

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

In varying ways both the charity and non-government sectors are preparing themselves to take over more of the services that the Premier referred to in his statement. Several years ago in my previous role with the Western Australian Council of Social Service I was made aware of the problem that faces the non-government sector and government. For several years the not-for-profit sector has been tracking what is basically underfunding in its contract of services. I will give an example of how that is played out. People who are happily working in not-for-profit organisations delivering child care, child protection or women's refuge services could very well be receiving a salary that is approximately 30 per cent less than if they were doing exactly the same job in a government agency. The Premier implied that more services will be handed over to the non-government sector. On the one hand that is remarkably sensible because the non-government sector is far better placed to access volunteer and community support in a far more effective way than is the government sector because it is closer to the community. However, currently the non-government sector is 30 per cent underfunded. If the government intends to ask the not-for-profit sector to deliver additional services, it must first consider adjusting the contract price that it is paying to the non-government sector to deliver services to the most vulnerable in our community. If the government does not do that, the result will be that services crash and burn. The demand on not-for-profit organisations will increase and they will not be able to meet it. The services that government would expect them to deliver would not be delivered and the poor and vulnerable in our community will be further disadvantaged by a government that has not carefully considered the true cost of service delivery or recognised and rewarded agencies for the extra value they bring in their ability to deliver contracts in this very complex and difficult area.

In his statement the Premier referred to the city's greatest asset being the Swan River. I will pick up on his comment. Indeed, it is the point on which I will spend most of my time in my response to his statement. I was browsing the government's websites and came upon Tourism WA's site, which said the following about the Swan River —

Get active and enjoy the sparkling waters of Perth's Swan River where you can go sailing and fishing, or just laze beside its wide expanses.

The Swan River is Perth's natural heartbeat—the city's location right on the river banks makes the capital one of the most beautiful in the world.

That is very good, but the Tourism WA website does not mention that if people intend to swim, sail or fish in our beloved Swan River, they might have to navigate plastic bags, tin cans and bottles. In addition, if they intend to laze beside the river's wide expanses or picnic on its banks, they had better not sit too close to the water's edge, particularly the upper reaches that pass through my electorate of Maylands. The riverbanks are so badly eroded that they might collapse and people could end up swimming in water that most Perth people would be loathe to cool off in even on the hottest day. I have been pictured on those eroding banks. I have been there recently and I know that to be a fact. The Swan and Canning River system is being choked by nutrients from fertilisers coming off the catchment areas. It has been happening for a long time and it has been known about for a long time. It is a fact that toxic heavy metals are leaching from former landfill sites into the groundwater creating poisonous plumes that make their way into this state's greatest asset, the river. The fact is that the drains that flow into our river are feeding poisons into our waterways. So bad is the health of our precious Swan River that last year six dolphins died; that is, about a quarter of the Swan River's 20 or 25 dolphin community.

To the Nyoongah traditional owners and custodians Western Australia's Swan River is known as the Derbal Yerrigan. The Nyoongah people see that they have a responsibility to protect and care for the land and its waters. It is an integral part of their spirit and culture. Len Collard writes the following about the Wagyl of the dreaming as it coils its way down the Swan River —

“The Waakal is the creator, the keeper of the freshwater sources.

“Creating the bends in the river at Belmont and Maylands as he went. Before he reached the islands at the Causeway, he rattled his skin, shaking all the scales off in the mud as he wrestled to gain access to Perth Water.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm

Ms L.L. BAKER: Before we broke for dinner I was mentioning the Swan River and the traditional owners and their commitment to caring for the Swan River. It is a responsibility that they feel deeply and which I am taking up on behalf of our constituents. But I am sorry to say that so far there is little sign that the Barnett government shares the community's sense of responsibility for our river. For Maylands people the Swan River is the heartbeat of the city's recreational, social and cultural landscape. It is where we walk, relax and meet friends. It reminds us of the beauty and tranquillity that nature and the environment have to offer. Yet it is a sad reality that the health of the river is being seriously threatened by declining water quality.

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

I am proud to say that the former Labor government, both under the leadership of Dr Gallop and Alan Carpenter, made tackling the declining health of the Swan River a top priority. Back in 2004 Premier Gallop and the then environment minister, Dr Judy Edwards, declared the Swan River to be Western Australia's first official heritage icon, as part of the 175th anniversary of the founding of the Swan River Colony. But the river was not just regarded as a symbol and words for the Gallop government. Dr Gallop's and Dr Edwards' announcement was accompanied by a clear plan of action and an extra \$15 million over four years to ensure the protection of our river system for generations to come. There was funding for drain rehabilitation and nutrient stripping works, funding for expanding river catchment and drainage monitoring programs, and funding for expanding the riverbank program where community and conservation groups work together with local government to restore eroding foreshores. Just as important as the allocation of extra funding, however, was the announcement that new legislation overseeing the river and its management would be introduced. The legislation was designed to give the Swan River Trust greater powers and form the basis for establishing the Swan-Canning Riverpark—reforms that have enabled a much more integrated management of the river system. But I will talk more about that and the success of that legislation later.

In 2006 Labor, and then environment minister Mark McGowan, undertook a major step forward in its commitment to improving the health of the river system by announcing that river-harming, highly soluble phosphate fertilisers would be phased out by 2011.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Hear, hear!

THE ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): I want to hear "Hear, hear!" from your chair, member.

Ms L.L. BAKER: Minister McGowan took this step in close consultation with the fertiliser industry, which, I am pleased to report, embraced the challenge of moving towards river-safe alternatives. I am sad to say, however, that today at the hands of our Liberal-National government the fertiliser action plan, which had at its heart a mandatory phase-out of nitrate phosphorus laden fertilisers, has been so substantially watered down, if members will excuse the pun, as to be rendered meaningless.

Also in 2006, Minister McGowan announced a 0.5 per cent increase in revenue from gaming machines and stated that the estimated \$15 million that would be generated over five years would go towards securing the health of the river. To use an old saying, we can safely claim that the Gallop and Carpenter governments put their money where their mouth was regarding Perth's river system. In September 2007, the Swan and Canning Rivers Management Act 2006 was proclaimed, providing a new direction for the future protection of the Swan and Canning Rivers. Since the introduction of that legislation, the Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council, its member councils, the Swan River Trust and the WA Planning Commission have used the legislation to develop management frameworks for the Swan River. These frameworks demonstrate just how instrumental the legislation has proven to be in providing supported integrated management. In demonstrating the success of the legislation, I congratulate the EMRC, which has been awarded a commendation for the "Swan and Helena Rivers Management Framework" in the Outstanding Sustainability Partnership Award at the 2009 National Environs Australia Sustainability Awards. The EMRC is currently developing a regional Aboriginal consultation plan, which will be informed by the work being completed this year by the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council, as it develops the Swan and Canning Rivers iconic trails project. Lotterywest is a significant partner in funding that work. Finally, at the end of 2007 the then Labor government released the results of a study into the impact of climate change on the Swan and Canning Rivers. It could be said that the former Labor government was looking out for the river.

As I mentioned earlier, a major cause of the failing health of the Swan River is the high level of nutrients that end up in our waterways and ultimately cause algal blooms, odours, low oxygen levels and fish deaths. In late December 2009, the Swan River Trust released a report into the health of the waterway called the "Swan Canning Water Quality Improvement Plan". The report revealed that nearly twice the maximum acceptable level of nitrogen and phosphorus is entering our river each year. The maximum acceptable level of nitrogen and phosphorous that can enter the river is 128 tonnes and 14 tonnes respectively. Currently, 251 tonnes of nitrogen and 26 tonnes of phosphorous are entering the river.

Over the past 12 months we have seen the nutrient level rise to twice the maximum acceptable level and an unprecedented number of dolphin deaths. As my colleague Dr Sally Talbot has said, the Swan River is slowly being poisoned. We know that some of the six dolphins that died last year had more than 20 times the global average of the poison dieldrin in their systems as well as abnormally high polychlorinated biphenyl concentrations that exceeded threshold levels. These findings make it clear that the government is failing to stop the river from being choked by nutrients and toxic run-off. Although I understand the need to fertilise the sandy soils of the Swan coastal plain to make it viable for agriculture, a significant and unacceptable amount of fertiliser, particularly highly water soluble phosphorus, continues to be applied in our catchments, and from there

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

it makes its way into our waterways. In contrast, WA Labor's fertiliser action plan, which was developed in close consultation with WA fertiliser producers, retailers and the community, set an end date to the use of these highly soluble fertilisers along the Swan coastal catchment. The plan provided unambiguous certainty to the industry and set clear directions to change the way that phosphorous fertilisers are applied in environmentally sensitive areas. The former Liberal shadow environment spokesman, Dr Steve Thomas, seemed to have appreciated the importance of phasing out highly soluble fertilisers and introducing low soluble fertilisers when he wrote —

The Liberal Party acknowledges the value of slow release low solubility fertiliser, and believes they have a significant role to play in reducing nutrient loads in rivers and streams.

...

Where the geology and hydrology of areas provide significant transfer of nutrients to river flows, particularly on the Swan Coastal Plain, there is a significant value in low solubility fertiliser.

Minister Donna Faragher's decision last year to abandon the mandatory phase-out of water-soluble fertilisers by 2011 marked a fateful day in the demise of the Swan River. I will quote one very important standout sentence from the background paper to the "Fertiliser Action Plan" that was published in 2007 —

Voluntary adoption of river-safe fertilisers by users has not been effective.

I will say it again —

Voluntary adoption of river-safe fertilisers by users has not been effective.

Also, there is evidence in the "Fertiliser Action Plan" that scientific experts are in favour of a mandatory phase-out. It states —

The decision to proceed with phasing out highly water soluble P fertilisers is supported by the findings of an International Peer Review of past and proposed management for the Swan–Canning estuary ...

[Member's time extended.]

Ms L.L. BAKER: The WA Labor government's plan to get farmers and householders to use river-friendly fertilisers would have been affordable and efficient. Industry was willing to make the change; it was ready to go. The plan states —

Fertiliser producers have indicated that they will be able to comply with the requirements to produce alternative fertilisers with low water solubility or reduced phosphorus levels. The fertiliser producers advised that some products on the market, particularly lawn fertilisers, already meet the proposed product criteria.

The fertiliser producers indicated that it is possible to produce alternative products for some bagged fertilisers within 6 to 12 months. ... For some producers, the changing of labelling and packaging seem to be more of a significant issue (than making the required fertiliser blend) ...

Instead of choosing this course of real action with the 2009–10 state budget, Minister Faragher instead announced a \$610 000 field trial. The minister has no credible ideas about how to protect the Swan and Canning river system. Indeed, she is paying external consultants almost \$100 000 of taxpayers' money to come up with some ideas to reinvent the wheel. The weight of scientific evidence will almost certainly guide these consultants to identify phosphorous fertilisers as the major threat to the health of the river. Imagine that!

Last March 2009 the Swan River Trust released a non-nutrient contaminants report documenting the results of a three-year study to look at the nature of contaminants other than nutrients delivered to and present in the Swan River catchment. The assessment identified and quantified a range of contaminants. Subcatchments of potential concern were also identified and prioritised for further investigation. Sections of the river were prioritised from one, which was the top priority, through to five, the lowest priority. Priorities were judged according to the number of variables where guidelines were exceeded and/or where concentrations were consistently high in addition to the potential for ecological harm based on the type of variable present. The contaminants of interest in the Swan River in Maylands and Bayswater—I am sorry that this is a bit technical but I need to read through them—are polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, which are typically components of asphalts, fuels, oils, greases, creosote and roofing tar; petroleum hydrocarbons, which originate from crude oil and are relatively volatile and most likely to enter the environment as a result of road runoff from vehicle fuel and oils; organochlorine pesticides, which are used to prevent or destroy pests of agriculture, livestock and buildings and whose use has been phased out, but they are often still present in the environment due to their persistent nature; herbicides, which are used to destroy, control or inhibit the growth of plant-based pests; and metals found in drain sediments and surface water likely to have come from human interventions. These metals are likely to have originated from road runoff, containing by-products of fuel, oil, products of tyre and brake wear and roof runoff. Finally, faecal

pollution in water may, for example, come from sewerage, septic tanks, piggeries, poultry farms, dairies and stockyards. Maylands subcatchment is ranked as a number one priority with the following contaminants present and exceeding guidelines: organochlorine pesticides, metals and faecal matter plus a potential issue with herbicides, petroleum hydrocarbons and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. Bayswater main drain catchment, the second area in my electorate, is ranked as a number two priority, as it contains organochlorine pesticides and metals and there is a potential issue with herbicides and petroleum hydrocarbons. Faecal coliforms were detected in both Maylands and Bayswater subcatchments, with primary contact guidelines for recreational use of the river being exceeded at both those sites.

The minister has responded by reassuring the public that it is safe to swim in the rivers and eat any fish caught in the rivers. She also asked Western Australia Chief Scientist Professor Lyn Beazley to advise her on the Swan River Trust report into the deaths of six dolphins, to gather further information from stakeholders and to consider the dolphin deaths within the context of the Swan and Canning river ecosystems. Where is the plan to tackle the problems identified in this report? I call on the government to clarify which agency is responsible for the metropolitan drains that are carrying these contaminants into our waterways. The Swan River Trust is responsible for the river but it does not control the drains, which have now been confirmed as a major source of pollution and toxins.

To give Minister Faragher some credit, in the wake of last year's negative coverage of the health of our river and the death of six dolphins, she found \$250 000 to fund the Perth region natural resource management group. The group is using that money to continue funding its highly effective program of environmentally auditing small businesses that are potential polluters. These are light industries such as garages, panelbeaters and chemical storage facilities. The program conducted 6 000 audits of small businesses between 2006 and 2009, including businesses in my electorate. It discovered that as many as 30 per cent of the businesses audited were failing to comply with environmental legislation. In real terms, this means that one in three businesses dispose of their waste—sometimes highly toxic chemicals—by pouring it into the drainage system. As mentioned earlier, the Bayswater main drain flows through my electorate. It is one of more than 600 drains discharging into the river and one of the top 10 drains identified by the Department of Water as being of concern, owing to the contaminant load it carries. Although I am happy that the minister was able to find \$250 000 for the Perth region natural resource management group so that it can continue its auditing, I believe that the auditing will be carried out in Welshpool and Kewdale. I am certainly not so happy that this program is not being fully funded, because it deserves to be funded across the entire metropolitan area. Three years ago, the Perth natural resource management group estimated that it would cost \$2.3 million to audit 45 000 light industries throughout Perth. That is an extremely modest amount of money when one considers the massive benefits that this project has the potential to deliver.

In another report on the dolphin deaths, released on 20 November 2009, the Swan River Trust suggested immediately establishing an advisory panel to steer research into dolphin deaths and contaminant assessment; conducting a contaminant survey; implementing contaminant source management through industry audits; conducting communication programs to educate people about fish line entanglement; increasing the number of river guardians; implementing community progress reporting; and continuing post-mortem pathology and contaminant assessment—a one-year project to improve understanding of a range of factors affecting dolphins. Depending on the outcomes of this work, the Swan River Trust recommends a number of comprehensive four-year studies into marine mammal health, toxicology, population assessments of the dolphin community and contaminant investigation.

Yet another report was released in 2009 calling for action on the impact of boat waves on riverbanks in the upper reaches of the Swan River. It was entitled "An Investigation into the Effects of Wash of Boats and Wind Waves on the Swan River". The study scientifically identified that speeding boats are a major cause of erosion on river foreshores and suggested that reducing boat speeds by just a few knots would have the potential to significantly reduce riverbank erosion. The current speed limit in the upper reaches of the river is eight knots; the report suggests reducing that speed to five or six knots. The lowering of boat speeds is the responsibility of the Minister for Transport, and I am happy to say that he has advised me that speeds are likely to be reduced before the next peak boating season.

The question that river lovers in my electorate—including those who row, paddle or sail—want answered is: why wait so long? They are sick of seeing trees and riverbanks collapse as a result of erosion. They rarely see a vessel patrolling the nine kilometres of river in my electorate. What they say is: what is the point of reducing boat speeds if there are no patrol boats to enforce it? They also despair at the sheer practical impossibility of reporting boats or jet skis whose drivers are speeding or are driving their vessels illegally outside the designated areas. Yes, there is a Department of Transport complaints form that people can use to report boats. But that is useful only if people can see the boat's registration and happen to have a camera handy so that they can take a

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

photograph of it. Really, it is a complete waste of time trying to follow that process. I urge the Minister for Transport to work with his department, WA Police and the Swan River Trust to sort out this problem; and, when they have sorted it out, to promote it to clubs, residents and river users.

As I have mentioned previously in this place, the City of Bayswater is doing a great job at restoring eroded riverbanks in Maylands and Bayswater. The City of Bayswater and the Swan River Trust have commenced work on the development of an erosion control design for the Tranby foreshore. Today, if we walk along the Tranby foreshore, we will see various sections of steep and unstable riverbank that are being rebuilt using a variety of materials and restoration methods. The City of Bayswater estimates that it will take 11 years, and cost \$6.5 million at today's prices, to restore the riverbanks that fall within its jurisdiction. That is six and a half times the \$1 million that is allocated each year to all local government river stakeholders under the Riverbank program. Perhaps it is time the Barnett government reviewed the success of this program and increased the funding allocated to it.

In conclusion, I would like to restate what I am calling on the Barnett government to act on now. I am calling on the Barnett government to reinstate the mandatory requirements of the fertiliser action plan so that dangerous and damaging fertilisers are phased out to protect the river. I am calling on the Barnett government to implement the recommendations made by the Swan River Trust for the control of non-nutrient contaminants in the Swan and Canning river system. The government needs to clarify which agency is responsible for the management of the metropolitan drains, which are carrying non-nutrient contaminants into our waterways. I am calling on the Barnett government to provide adequate funding to allow for the roll-out of industry auditing across the metropolitan area; and, subsequently, to provide funding to businesses to encourage the improved management of waste products. I am calling on the Barnett government to implement the responses recommended by the Swan River Trust in its recent report on dolphin deaths. I am calling on the Barnett government to move immediately to reduce boat speeds on the Swan River, and to investigate the management of boat hull shapes. Finally, I am calling on the Barnett government to review the successful Riverbank program and increase funding to this program.

In the words of the chairman of the Swan River Trust, Jim Freemantle —

The battle of history is what we are up against ... This river has been used as a depository for rubbish for 150 years and it is still being used that way.

That is a quote from *The West Australian* of 23 November 2009.

The Premier and Minister Faragher are holding the reins. They are responsible now for taking action to save the river. There are no excuses. The science is clear. Do the right thing now for this iconic West Australian river.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): Before I call on the member for Gosnells, I call the member for Rockingham to order for talking when out of his seat.

MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Gosnells) [7.23 pm]: I am very pleased to bring to the notice of this Parliament what I think is an uprising of community interest in how we shape our suburbs and regions. I want to bring to the notice of this Parliament in particular some events that have taken place in the Thornlie area of my electorate. Those events demonstrate that the community now has a real passion about, and interest in, shaping our suburbs and our planning decisions. People in the community now have a real interest in making their views known about what their streetscapes should look like, what the amenity of their areas should be like, and what environmental values should be protected. However, I also want to bring to the notice of this Parliament just how concerned people are that their views are not being listened to. That is the overriding message coming from events in the Gosnells electorate surrounding a man who has become known as the Thornlie tree man. I can report that tonight represents, I think, the seventy-ninth night that the Thornlie tree man has spent in the tree. The tree is a *Eucalyptus melliodora*—a species which is found mostly in Victoria, but which was used in landscape plantings in Thornlie when the suburb was being created. Hume Road in Thornlie was an attractive tree-lined road in an electorate that, it must be said, lacks tree-lined streets. We often talk about the leafy western suburbs but, unfortunately, for one reason or another, local governments, different planning processes and different drivers of the development and wellbeing of our suburbs have not seen fit to have the same level of leafiness in the suburbs of the south eastern corridor, particularly Thornlie and Gosnells. However, Hume Road did have a good line-up of trees. I said that it “did have” because it was deemed that the trees on Hume Road were a potential risk to humans and that some sort of catastrophic event happens to these trees when they reach the age of 30 years and they start dropping limbs. Understandably, with some general advice from internal arborists at the City of Gosnells, it was decided to fell all the trees that could pose a risk to human life if a branch fell on a car or on a person passing by.

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

I think that is understandable reasoning from the City of Gosnells in an initial phase, but the council did not anticipate, and has not dealt with, the community uprising. People realised that these trees were of significance to them in their day-to-day lives. When they made their complaints known to the city, the city wanted to continue to eliminate the trees, instead of perhaps switching to a case-by-case strategy whereby it could have been possible to determine whether individual trees really posed a risk. Of course, if the trees posed a risk, they would have to come down, but if certain trees were not risks, perhaps they could stay until such time as two independent expert arborists could provide advice that those trees were a danger. That would have been a better strategy than going into conflict with a resident who felt compelled to live in the tree to protect it. Seventy-nine days later, this man is still very concerned about how the tree on his verge will be treated should he leave the tree. He is determined to stay there until there is a clear message from the council that the tree will not come down until such time as it has been deemed to be a serious risk to humans in the area.

I give all this background because it demonstrates that people want to be involved at a fairly micro level in the decision making about how their suburbs look. That is a great lesson to us all because I think we are seeing, at many levels in Western Australia, something of a step backwards. I know there was a time under the Court government, and then under the Gallop and Carpenter governments, when public consultation on issues was valued and embraced. It was recognised that good community consultation had to be funded. I have touched on this theme previously in the house. It was recognised that people in the community had to be given the same level of information as paid professionals working on a particular issue.

Other benefits have come out of Richard Pennicuik's efforts as the Thornlie tree man. One of these benefits is the creation of a group in the community called Make the City of Gosnells Beautiful. These people have said that what Richard is doing for the tree on his verge is wonderful, but that they want to help shape the policy that the City of Gosnells applies right across its local government area. Discussions are still going on about the policy objectives of the group. However, at this stage it is looking as though their number one policy will be that no tree comes down unless there are independent, qualified arborists providing advice that there is a danger. They also are insistent that future plantings use local indigenous native species. They also want to have our streets made safer and more pleasant by providing adequate shade for people and providing that amenity aspect so that people want to get out into and walk around the streets more. So we see the linkage between good amenity and making sure that our streets are safer.

Indeed, during the course of Richard Pennicuik's stay in the tree, numerous people have said to me, "What a wonderful thing that there is actually activity going on in Hume Road." I have had one complaint also, with people saying that it has brought too much activity to the street. However, the overwhelming number of reports from people are that they appreciate the fact that people are taking a stand. It has been surprising how many people from overseas and interstate have made a visit to see the Thornlie tree man one of their first ports of call in Western Australia, such has been the level of international media reports that have come up. There have been reports on CNN, Al Jazeera and other international media networks such as the BBC that have led people to think that they must make sure that they visit the Thornlie tree man when they are in Western Australia. Likewise, people who went to see the very spectacular Christmas light displays in Thornlie included on their list of things to do when they were in the Thornlie area a visit to see Richard and to wish him well.

There must be community consultation. That is the lesson that comes out of this exercise for me. We must make sure that people feel that they are being listened to. This also applies to the broader planning issues. We are looking to do a lot of rezoning for urban densification in the Gosnells electorate and in the City of Gosnells local government area. These are good initiatives that will enable people to live in affordable dwellings not far from the city centre. There is a lot of potential there, and so far, from what I can see, there is good community support, because I think the City of Gosnells has done a good job in consulting with the community on the various rezonings and the different density R codings that will come into play with the new or amended town planning scheme when that is put through.

Now I will deal with other planning issues in the City of Gosnells. As I am sure has been the case in most electorates, schools have been the recipients of excellent funding from the federal government under the Building the Education Revolution funding scheme that was set up under the economic stimulus package. Some wonderful facilities are going up at all the schools in the electorate that I am fortunate to represent. However, I would like to bring the attention of the house to the works going on at the Australian Islamic College. The Australian Islamic College in Thornlie is an excellent school. The academic achievements of children who go to this school are outstanding, and the quality of education there, the sense of community and the connection between student, teacher and family are exemplary. It is an excellent school that has everything working well. I am very pleased that the school has been promised funding for a new library under the BER funding scheme. That should be a fairly straightforward thing to go ahead, one would think. Unfortunately, it seems that some obstacles have been put in the Australian Islamic College's way, particularly regarding parking. There is a

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

concern that a lot of people need to go to the college for prayer worship on Fridays, and these people drive their cars to the college. There is a requirement that the Australian Islamic College come up with the parking spaces for people who go to worship at the college. I am very impressed that the college and its principal, Mrs Popie Hossain, have come up with an excellent idea—that is, to offer to rent parking bays at the nearby Thornlie Square Shopping Centre at this peak time for the college, around lunchtime on Fridays, when the shopping centre is relatively quiet and certainly these parking bays are not being used. To my knowledge, that idea has not been supported by the Thornlie Square Shopping Centre owners, which is disappointing. Likewise, I am concerned that the City of Gosnells is not helping to facilitate a great initiative that would make good use of parking space that would otherwise be unused, and also overcomes the problem of the school having to duplicate parking facilities that would be redundant at other times. It is a good initiative, and one that the Australian Islamic College really deserves great congratulations for. I hope that it will not be thwarted in any way.

Many other things are happening in the electorate of Gosnells that one cannot help but notice, and there are great success stories of local events. We had the Multicultural Food Fair in November; we had the Langford Aboriginal Association's community Christmas party and the launch of the Noongar Food Garden in December; and we had a breakfast on Australia Day. These events were great family occasions and a delight to be at. They were good fun and a real pleasure to attend. A common element that I think made these events so successful and such a pleasure to attend was the fact that they were, of course, alcohol free. Likewise, over the weekend we had the alcohol-free Gozzy Rock event. Much is to be said for alcohol-free events. I know it became a fairly contentious issue in relation to the Perth Skyshow this year, and some concern was raised about the police's tolerance level of what could be technically termed as street drinking. Although there are benefits in having alcohol-free events, these events, unfortunately, do not get statewide media reporting because nothing criminal ever happens at them; they are just very pleasant occasions. We have to ask ourselves whether it is time to bring about a change in Australian culture, which, to date, has supported the view that any celebration needs alcohol associated with it. It is time to review that line of thinking and to embrace the idea that we are strong enough as individuals and mature enough as a culture to decide quite happily that we can have a great time and celebrate while making it an alcohol-free event.

Again, my congratulations go to the City of Gosnells for making the Multicultural Food Fair such a huge success. I particularly acknowledge the work of Shannon O'Neill and the city's director of community engagement, Adelle Cochran. Shannon is the city's community development officer. They did great work in bringing it all together and having such an array of different cuisines from around the world that represented the multiculturalism of the City of Gosnells. That is tremendous in itself, as is the success of the launch of the Noongar Food Garden; what a wonderful story to tell. The knowledge of native plants that Nyoongah people have had this connection with for 40 000 to 60 000 years, and that they have had as a part of their staple diet, is now there for others to learn about. It is a wonderful story, and everyone now has a great opportunity to learn more about these connections.

Alcohol relates in some part to the next issue I will touch on, which is the degree of anger and aggressivity in our community. I know that other things are triggers for the more extreme end of that anger and aggressiveness spectrum, but obviously drugs play a key role. But I think, as well, there is something in our culture at the moment that is letting go of those basic words of politeness that keep us all engaged and communicating with one another. I am often struck that when doing something as simple as queuing up to pay for petrol in a service station, those normal words of polite discourse seem to be dropping out of our regular communications. Perhaps that is a reflection of the anger that some people feel, or perhaps it is a chicken-and-egg situation and the fact that people are letting these words of politeness drop out of their vocabularies is stopping that sense of connection that they otherwise might feel. Another area I am very alarmed about is the level of anger and aggressivity that we are seeing on websites that probably many members in this chamber read, like the PerthNow and inMyCommunity websites. I am sure that when members check articles in their local newspapers they look at sites like PerthNow and see anonymously written, very aggressive and often factually wrong and grammatically incorrect statements. Why should people get away with making these sorts of statements without putting their real name to them? Would they make such statements if they had to put their name and address to them? Members can criticise the content and quality of letters to the editor in *The West Australian*, but at least a person's name and suburb is published by the newspaper.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: This issue of aggressivity in the community must be addressed. It obviously leads into much more severe circumstances. There has been a murder in the Gosnells electorate in the past few months; shots have been fired at the Turkish mosque; and there have been gunpoint hold-ups and other incidents as well. These are difficult times. I was struck by the Premier's views in his statement about how the government would be handling the boom. It has to be said that one of the downsides of not managing the next boom properly will be

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

that people will have an ongoing sense of disenfranchisement; they will be facing real poverty, they will be turning to drugs and alcohol for solace, then making extreme and irrational decisions and acting violently. There is a problem with domestic violence in the electorate. These are real problems that have to be dealt with, and they are the cost of not managing the boom properly. They also include binge drinking-related problems, which are perhaps slightly different circumstances to the aggressivity problem, but again it comes back to excesses and the lack of good sense that is being shown by community leaders. That is something we all have to do.

Of course, hooning continues to be a problem. People may believe that the Barnett government is getting tough on hoons, but if members ask people in my electorate whether they see less hooning, the overwhelming answer would be no and that the hooning rate is just the same. When people come up with community-led initiatives or suggestions on how the problem could be dealt with, such as speed cushions, they are told there is not enough government funding to deal with that problem. The funding is not available and they just have to grin and bear it while their local street is known as a race strip. Those are frightening circumstances for people to have to live with when they have young children who are growing up in suburban streets where cars are all too frequently exceeding the normal speed limits.

I touched on the issue of domestic violence, and I would like to acknowledge the role of the Armadale Domestic Violence Intervention Project, especially its coordinator, Angie Wragg. This is an excellent initiative that has helped bring about a multi-pronged approach in dealing with the issue of domestic violence, whereby offenders and victims are brought into programs and there is a linking together of victim support services, offender programs, police and other programs and especially community awareness of the problem. There are complexities in running those programs, and the challenges that they face when it comes to securing funding are horrendous. The Premier was saying that he is concerned about the amount of time that organisations spend on administration; he is right, this is a very real problem. I am not sure that the problem can be solved simply by shifting a lot of the work that is essentially done for all sorts of social service reasons into the non-government sector where it can supposedly be done more cheaply. I do not think it is reasonable to expect that to be a sustainable option; it would inevitably lead to burnout of the organisations that were given that work to do. There are some real risks with shifting some of the very good work that is done out of the government sector into the NGO sector. As much as I support the work of people in non-government organisations who do all sorts of valuable social services work, they must not be forced to do that work at some cut-price rate whereby one organisation has to compete against another. Inevitably we hear about figures such as a service being 30 per cent cheaper if it is done in the NGO sector rather than in government. That sort of approach is unacceptable because it is really a form of exploiting those people who have made the career choice to work in what is often a very challenging sector.

Another issue that impacts on the day-to-day lives of people in my electorate is power bills. There has been a lot of press about horrendous power bill errors that people have received from Synergy in recent times. They are of course facing price hikes that are outrageous in themselves; however, it seems that Synergy's billing systems have been a complete shambles of late. I know of constituents in my electorate who normally receive bills that are in the order of \$50, based on consumption of about seven units a day, but have suddenly received a bill that says they have consumed 40 units a day for the past two months, which corresponds to about \$400-plus. Ridiculous things have been going on. It is one thing for the billing system to make errors, it is another—this is the issue that people have been facing—when people phone up Synergy for answers and have been given totally unsatisfactory service in response; in fact, they have been totally ignored. I was pleased to see on the cover of the *Comment News* today that Mr Cecil Khin from Thornlie, after work by my office, has at last been reimbursed for an error and, in fact, it has been recognised that he was grossly overcharged. However, that took months of letter writing; it was September last year when Cecil first took that issue up with the Synergy people. Clearly, Synergy has a problem in its customer service area—a very big problem indeed.

I should touch on the issue that met us as we came in to Parliament today—that is, genetically modified canola crops. During question time I heard the Minister for Agriculture and Food suggest that the issue of contamination is not likely to occur in Western Australia. I would say that at two levels there is a very real risk of GM crops contaminating GM-free crops. It will occur in the paddocks. The fact is that the pollens are transported by insects and the boundaries, the buffering, being suggested by proponents of GM crops are totally inadequate, so we will get contamination at that level. The minister was also very keen to say he feels that our grain handlers are capable of keeping the grains segregated. Going back to my days working for Co-operative Bulk Handling—I worked for that company during three harvests in the early 1980s—I would say it was a fairly frequent occurrence for university students working on the wheat bins to perhaps not pay full attention to the contents of a truck that came in. Before we knew it, we had a 10 tonne truckload of oats going into the wheat stack and I remember a couple of times when a load of barley ended up in the wheat stack. The view was, “Well, don't worry too much; we're selling the stuff off to Russia.” I think the Soviet Union, as it was then, was our

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

main buyer at the time—do not worry too much, they can handle a bit of grain contamination. What measures are in place to avoid such handling mix-ups? In Victoria this year, or this harvest—it might have been in December 2009—there were at least three instances of truckloads of grain going on the wrong stack. Genetically modified canola ended up with non-genetically modified canola. It is a reality that those sorts of mixes occur.

In the time I have left I will highlight something that I think the Labor Party can be very proud of. I was very pleased that the Leader of the Opposition announced that we had a discussion paper out for comment. It is a precursor to a policy position that relates to electric cars. We held an electric car expo at the front of Parliament House. It was a great occasion to see how close to reality this technology is. People from the Australian Electric Vehicle Association came along and displayed a number of vehicles. One can convert a petrol car to an electric car very cheaply. It is something for the future.

MS J.M. FREEMAN (Nollamara) [7.51 pm]: Nollamara is a proud part of the world. Mr Acting Speaker is welcome to visit anytime.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): I drive through it quite often, actually.

Dr K.D. Hames: For a massage!

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Let us move on. I look for Mr Acting Speaker's protection from the sorts of spurious comments that the Minister for Health is making about me in terms of associations with massage, other than therapeutic of course!

I rise in response to the Premier's Statement. The Premier spoke about industrial relations and requested that we set aside our close ties to union powerbrokers to ensure industrial relations does not become a battleground. My ties are not to union powerbrokers but to union members and working people, and to provide a fair system that defends workers' rights to bargain in the workplace. It upsets me when all that happens from the other side is that we get noted when there is some dispute and never noted when many, many instances of good bargaining have occurred between employers and employees, who have been able to reach agreement with the assistance of union representatives. They worked really hard at that. It seems quite strange that the Premier made those comments today; a day on which the front page of *The West Australian* presents a perfect example of two parties coming together to successfully negotiate an enterprise bargaining agreement that takes into account some of the harsh working conditions expected on the Gorgon project. That agreement was between the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union and the Thiess company. It represents the success of the new industrial relations system. It should not be said that this system does not give returns because it gives great returns. It gives great returns and certainty to workers and employers. We need to remember that and celebrate it. When we question things, we need to understand the circumstances around certain issues that will present in any disputed industrial negotiations.

The Premier also talked about protecting the environment. It is an amazing situation that we have other national parks and we want to add Ningaloo to the World Heritage List. We also have to look at protecting our urban environment. Mirrabooka has a deteriorating urban environment. It has lots of Bush Forever land. It has lots of land that is owned and controlled by the state and is being allowed to decay and to become quite poorly looked after. It is now used by people on trail bikes—we therefore have the problem of trail bike riding in our urban regions—and it is being used as a dumping ground. I believe we need to also put a great emphasis on how our urban environments and those Bush Forever sites are being managed. One site adjoins John Septimus Roe Anglican Community School in Mirrabooka. I am talking about a large piece of land. Members who have driven along Reid Highway would know that it is on the left as they pass Mirrabooka Avenue. Basically it is being allowed to fall into decay. John Septimus Roe school first raised with government some years ago that the school and its bush cadets were happy to look after the land and become almost custodians of this particular land. It used to have kangaroos on it; it used to have quite a lot of other wildlife and other quite important fauna; now it is just used as a dumping ground. When I was lucky enough to be elected to this place, John Septimus Roe school approached me and said that the school had spoken to basically every member of Parliament who had represented the area and that the Minister for Health was probably approached at one stage about this land. The school has tried for years to establish a system so that the bush cadets and the school can look after this land. The difficulty is that the school does not want to commit to and put money into such a system unless there is some sort of ongoing sustainable agreement between the state government and the school about the resources the school puts into that area. That has been the stumbling block because at the moment Bush Forever owns the land but does not necessarily look after it; Bush Forever has to transfer the land to the Department of Environment and Conservation. As that department already has scarce resources, the land therefore just sits there with no-one doing anything active on it or doing anything to the benefit of the community in that area. I therefore call on this

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

government, if it is serious about protecting the environment, to look not just at the big picture, but also at delivering what is real, what is local and what is capable of being done in the local community.

The Premier also spoke about health and he talked about the hospitals and how fantastic they are. However, he did not talk about preventative health. That seems to me to be somewhat of a concern. I want to talk about a preventative health issue that also goes to an issue of concern in our community about some of the more antisocial behaviour that is occurring; that is, alcohol consumption. I ask the government to consider putting alcohol warning labels on bottles and alcohol products. Alcohol is third only to tobacco—I think it is third, as hypertension beats it—as one of the three most common causes of deaths. It is second only to tobacco as the cause of drug-related deaths in hospitalisations. Each year in Australia approximately 3 100 people die as a result of excessive alcohol consumption, and around 72 000 people are hospitalised; those figures are from the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy in 2006. In Western Australia in 2005 approximately 440 people died and 12 000 were hospitalised due to alcohol-related causes; that data is from 2008. A recent estimate put the total cost to Australia as a whole of alcohol-associated problems at \$15 billion a year. Close to 40 per cent of people consume risky levels of alcohol on a weekly basis. In addition to the risk of liver disease, all alcohol significantly increases the risk of developing certain types of cancer, such as bowel, breast, mouth, throat, voice box, oesophagus and liver cancers.

Research has shown that alcohol misuse is associated with 50 per cent of deaths from assault, 44 per cent of deaths from fire injuries, 16 per cent of child abuse deaths and 12 per cent of suicides. Alcohol misuse is also associated with 34 per cent of falls and drownings, 25 per cent of car crashes, 18 to 24 per cent of mental health disorders, 11 per cent of cardiovascular disease and 10 per cent of industrial accidents. We have a public health issue on our hands and we need to address it. Western Australia Police estimate that between 60 and 80 per cent of all their call-out time is spent dealing with people who are drunk and the damage and injury they have caused. Many verbal and physical assaults in Western Australia are fuelled by drunkenness. According to the 2004 National Drug Strategy Household Survey it is estimated that each year more than 80 000 Western Australians are physically abused by people who are drunk, and more than 400 000 are victims of alcohol-related verbal abuse.

These statistics are well established and conclusive on the dangers of alcohol consumption, but they are known and understood by an astonishingly small proportion of the population. At least in part this is because the information has not been made known to the general population in a consistent and persistent manner. The discussion needs to go beyond the belief that the problem will simply be solved by legal remedy. Certainly legislative and regulatory solutions should be investigated. However, the current debate regarding age limits disregards the social issues around the problem. Increasing the age limit will simply increase the alcohol problems confronting police because it will introduce the further complexity for police of compliance with an age limit. As the police commissioner was recently reported in the media as saying, it will shift the problem because police already have to react to underage drinking.

This is an issue that is beyond one of individual blame and responsibility. It is an issue of public health, and we need to look at it as an issue of public health. We need to look at the success of the anti-smoking campaign and be guided in our response to gain similar victories. We must have the courage that previous parliamentarians had in taking on the might of the tobacco industry and do the same with the alcohol industry and its subsidiaries. For example, a recent study by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, better known as VicHealth, surveyed the potential application and popularity of proposed warning labels on alcohol products. In conducting the study the researchers also surveyed the community understanding of drinking guidelines and alcohol-related issues. The researchers found that many of the facts presented in the surveys were new to many participants. For example, many people surveyed were unaware of the link between alcohol and cancer. Currently, Australia uses “standard drink” as a measurement of alcohol content in an attempt to limit the drinking to a healthy level. While these guidelines for safe alcohol consumption have been the basis of a significant education program, they are often ineffective for a number of reasons. Firstly, the guidelines are not persistent or noticeable enough to act as an easily applicable limitation to the consumption of alcohol. People may well have difficulty reminding themselves of how much they are meant to consume on a daily or weekly basis. Furthering this problem is that the standard drink measurement is far from prevalent on alcohol containers and even less so in venues such as pubs. Secondly, surveys such as the one recently conducted by VicHealth have established that many people exempt their drinking habits from the guidelines. This is largely due to lack of experience and understanding of the risks laid out in the guidelines. A standard drink is an abstract concept, and the measurements alone are unlikely to be respected in the minds of people consuming alcohol. A potential solution to this problem is the introduction of compulsory health warning labels on all alcohol containers. The concept of these labels closely follows that of the warning labels on cigarette packets in both concept and probable effect. These warning labels would serve three key purposes: to educate, to remind and to deter. Firstly, health warning labels serve to remedy the issue of

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

limited public awareness by presenting information in a prominent and noticeable manner on every alcohol beverage. The rarely discussed facts and statistics become widely known and virtually unavoidable. There would be preferably a range of health warning labels in circulation at any given time and both short and long-term effects of alcohol consumption should be included. As well as educating drinkers of the risks of drinking alcohol, the constant presence of health warning labels on all alcohol containers would act as a persistent reminder. While it is easy enough for people to ignore, forget or brush aside knowledge gained from the current educative campaigns, ignoring a constant reminder reflected in warning labels is far more difficult.

Finally, health warning labels have the capacity to actively deter people from excessive consumption of alcohol with graphic imagery akin to that on cigarette warning labels. While the images of the damage of alcohol would likely be less disturbing than their smoking counterparts, they would nonetheless have the capacity to make people think twice before drinking.

If the success of cigarette warning labels is replicated, awareness of the health risks behind alcohol would be greatly increased. Alcohol warning labels present as a likely beneficial addition to the educative campaigns against alcohol that have been ongoing in Western Australia for some time. The only argument that comes to my mind against the introduction of such labels is aesthetics. It is not the job of the government to protect the advertising capacity of the alcohol industries above the health and wellbeing of the public. Excessive alcohol consumption is one of the most damaging issues in our society today and something on which we must actively act to reduce.

In his statement the Premier talked about independent schools and heralded the second round of independent schools. My concern is that the second round is being introduced when the business cases for the current schools have not been presented. I understand that they are to be finalised and presented to the Department of Education and Training by May this year. In other words, we are embarking on a whole new process that, frankly, is full of speculation and uncertainty. We have not had the opportunity to review the business plans of the 34-odd schools currently involved. It appears to me that the government is rushing in where fools fear to tread. Better policy development would advise caution.

From my perspective the provision of schools is a fundamental requirement of an education system; that is, the provision of high-quality schools within local proximity. It is all about public schools—affordable, accessible and quality education. The marketing of public schools as independent public schools is bordering on an unfair attack on the idea of public schools. It is like saying, “Well, public schools aren’t good enough, so we’ll call them independent public schools.” It undermines the whole education system. It is poor marketing and the community feels that the current education system will be undermined by the independent schools that will take over. Suddenly we want to run with something that undermines what is a very good system of education in Western Australia. My comments do not mean that I disagree with devolution to the community, thus allowing the community to have a greater say in their school, in flexibility or in local school selection. I do not disagree with any of these things, and schools have not been prevented from doing them. This is simply a marketing tool that allows principals to think that they can have greater control of their school without knowing the ramifications of that greater control. When there is an unfair dismissal, the department will be called in and a lot of members of the community might find themselves involved.

I understand that under the agreement schools can change their staffing profile. That is pretty good. It could mean that a school does not have a deputy principal, but has more teachers. What would be the implications of the delivery of education as it applies to the curriculum and other things? We do not know the answers and we are heading into territory that is based on speculation.

[Member’s time extended.]

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I was interested to read in a recent press report that the principal of the Morley Primary School said that the key components of a good school will always be quality teaching with a balanced curriculum and a strong parent involvement in school activities to complement the pupil–teacher–parent relationship. I think that is fantastic. However, strong parent involvement is not necessarily what I am seeing in my electorate. I do not know whether other members are seeing that in their electorates. I have certainly not seen strong community involvement in my electorate. When I was talking to some African women recently, a light went on for me. I asked them whether they had thought about getting involved in the local P&C. They gave an unknowing smile and I asked them whether they knew what a P&C was. They did not know what a P&C was. I have a concept of a P&C because my mum and dad served on one, but these African women did not have a concept of a P&C. It is about discussing how they become involved in their school and in education. We cannot have independent schools that cannot involve all the diverse people in their community. We have not done that yet. Where parents and citizens associations are vibrant and operating, they often operate because of a few pretty strong individuals, and when those individuals go, we see P&Cs and school councils fall into disarray. I am

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

therefore really concerned about the implications of the two-tiering of a system that we should embrace and celebrate.

When people ask me about the major issue in the electorate of Nollamara, I have to say that it is simply homes and housing. The question of housing is raised with me all the time. It is the lack of houses, affordability of them, access to them or the infrastructure and safety around them. Yesterday the Real Estate Institute of Australia released its median house price for the fourth quarter of 2009, revealing that the average price of a house in Perth has risen to a high of \$480 000. Because housing is not accessible, it places greater demand on public housing as the gap between the availability and adequacy of housing and its affordability grows. As at 1 February 2009, there were 9 013 people on the priority housing list. This was an increase from the 31 July 2009 figure of 7 570—so almost 2 000 people. As I understand it, the overall number of people on the general housing waiting list—as at 1 February 2010—is 22 920, of which, unfortunately, 8 491 are in the north metropolitan area. Therefore, a large group is in the areas that I have the privilege to represent. It has grown since 31 July 2009 from 21 700. One of the organisations that work in this field talks about the situation at the moment growing at 80 applications a week in the public housing sector. Despite this, the promise to build 600 new Homeswest homes by February 2010 seems to have faded. I understand that only about three homes have been built. I am concerned about this inaction by government. That, combined with the reduction in the number of new blocks being released to the market from 20 916 in 2006–07 to 12 179 in 2008–09, has a marked impact on housing affordability.

The Treasurer has recently come out with his housing cheat spin. As no-one likes a cheat, he is seen as a good bloke because he is fixing the problem. But the problem is far greater than the 750 people earning above the Department of Housing's income or assets unit and the 31 who he says that the department will now evict. In September 2009, the Treasurer released a report stating that one tenant in a state-owned, three-bedroomed house in the southern suburbs was evicted after the audit found the tenant had a job in which the tenant earned \$85 000 a year—four times the \$22 000 eligibility cut-off for singles. He repeated that statement, using the same example, on 15 February 2010. Although that case seems fair and reasonable, it is just one case repeated again. There have been no other cases. What the spin does not tell the community is the cases that, although they appear to fall into the Treasurer's category, are simply those of people trying to make ends meet. Let us take Jenny for example. She lives in Mirrabooka. She is 61 years of age and she has been in a house for about six years. She was placed in a situation of having to seek Homeswest accommodation after a relationship breakdown. She has a limited retirement income, which is an unfortunate factor for many women in the Western Australian community. She was able to gain employment during the boom. Having a limited retirement income, she took advantage of it, but she now earns approximately \$100 over the cap of \$430. She earns around \$530 a week. The minimum wage in Australia is \$543 a week. She has received a letter that says that she is earning too much and she should leave her property because she is over the limit. That does not seem right. She is 61 and will retire in a few years. She needs retirement income. It is not a fair way to treat people. The Treasurer runs the risk of playing the game of bludgers and battlers; that is, stigmatising those in financial hardship and penalising them if they try to seek to help. In Jenny's case, she sought to reduce her income so that she could come within the income threshold.

What does that do to our productivity, to the way our community works, to how our economy needs to operate and to how she needs to save for her future? The minister needs to demonstrate his commitment that a house is more than just a roof and four walls by ensuring that tenants such as Jenny are not disadvantaged and discouraged by generalisations that advantage no-one. It is not enough to play the blame game. The problem is far greater when one acknowledges that almost 50 per cent of the current public rental housing tenants are householders in receipt of either the aged pension or disability pension and have no viable option to exit public housing. The lack of alternative affordable rental options brought about by the restricted housing supply and overwhelming demand feeding rental increases has resulted in a marked decline in the turnover of public housing from more than 5 000 a year 10 years ago to fewer than 3 500 last year. Let us be clear: the problem is not about people exploiting public housing, it is about the lack of public housing.

I welcome the significant federal funding for meeting this demand in Western Australia but I am concerned that it is not being put into place. Currently only four per cent of housing in Western Australia is public housing. That level cannot meet the needs of the community. The most vulnerable tenants and tenants with complex needs make up the priority list. Shelter WA, which represents the community sector in housing, argues that to establish a viable safety net, a proportion of at least six per cent of housing must be made public housing in an environment in which the forthcoming boom will create an even greater demand for housing. Shelter WA's most recent response to the "More Than a Roof and Four Walls" social housing task force report, which was released by the minister, urged the government to build additional units rather than develop or make accessible existing stock. Shelter WA's response was framed after a consultative workshop process with the community housing

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

sector. I concur with Shelter WA that a very high priority should be attached to the need to provide five or six-bedroom dwellings for Indigenous families, as it is difficult for many of those families to procure private rental stock.

I draw the attention of the house to what I believe is the lack of action by the Department of Housing to effectively use the land available to it for housing stock and for not selling its land into the private market as a land release. For example, in Mirrabooka, the land bounded by Mirrabooka Avenue, Chesterfield Road and both sides of Milldale Road amounts to seven hectares and was obtained by the government in a land resumption in the 1950s yet it still sits vacant today, awaiting zoning.

Dr K.D. Hames: I know.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: What is the minister doing about it? What is happening with health? Can the minister do something about it?

Dr K.D. Hames: We are negotiating with the Department of Housing and trying to come to an agreement on the land.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I want to finish this off. I am advised that no action on the land is expected before 2011. The vacant land adds to a sense of urban decay in the area. It is unkempt scrub, which is distinguished by groups of people using it as a drinking area and sometimes as a camping area.

Dr K.D. Hames interjected.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I ask for the Deputy Speaker's protection!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, Deputy Premier!

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Meanwhile, the need for available land releases where there is appropriate infrastructure goes begging. In December, the release of 42 lots of land that was made available to first home buyers in Girrawheen as a result of demolishing 77 state housing villas was welcomed. It seems inconceivable that because there is such a demand and need for land that the Mirrabooka land remains undeveloped and an eyesore to the people in the area.

Dr K.D. Hames interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, Deputy Premier!

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: The further timely release of this land —

Dr K.D. Hames interjected.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I can yell very loudly, minister! The further timely release of this land would illustrate that the government was keeping in line with the recommendations of the social housing task force that was released in June 2009. With regard to the social housing task force report and the recent media releases on public housing, there seems to be an increasing emphasis on transferring the responsibility of housing —

Dr K.D. Hames interjected.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I thank the minister. I had to read it because someone was interjecting on me in such a manner that I felt I could defend myself only by reading my speech.

Dr K.D. Hames: You asked me a question.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I do not want to ask the minister a question. Has he not worked that out yet?

Although the community housing sector plays a vital role in the provision of alternative public housing stock, caution should be exercised and the sector should not be used simply as a cheap alternative for the provision of public housing by the state. I am very concerned about the government's intention. In the Premier's speech today he spoke about transferring many of the social responsibilities and the community services to the community sector. I concur that the community sector delivers services very well but it does that in an environment in which it is not paid equivalent to the work that it does. We cannot do that simply because we want it as a cheap alternative. We cannot exploit people's philanthropic and better characters because the government of Western Australia does not want to deliver proper and good community services.

It is very important to ensure that tenants maintain a security of tenure provided by public housing, coupled with the accountability and transparency of decisions. I would like to note that I call it public housing. I am very concerned that somehow we have suddenly changed the language to "social housing". I think we are trying to broaden it into the community housing space. I am not opposed to community housing. I have dealt with community housing over the years; it delivers a very good service. Sustainable, ongoing and affordable housing with an adequate number of public houses is still a responsibility of government, and that should not be devolved

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

anywhere else or privatised anywhere else. That is our responsibility as a government and that is our responsibility to the people in our community.

MR J.N. HYDE (Perth) [8.22 pm]: I would like to speak about a conference I attended in January called “Response Beyond Borders”, which was hosted by the Asian Consortium on Drug Use, HIV, AIDS and Poverty. It was the parliamentarians’ session at the “Second Asian Consultation on the Prevention of HIV Related to Drug Use”. I represented Australia’s parliamentary group on population and development. It was a very important conference, particularly for those of us in Australia who live in a state that has adopted harm minimisation as the correct response to minimising drug use and dealing with the very complex issues of drug use in our society.

One of the speakers who was an Australian, Geoff Manthey, is a co-chair at UNAIDS. He detailed the impact of criminalisation on drug use, saying that it drives people underground, thus spreading HIV and other problems, and collects drug users in prisons where they can have access to drugs and creates HIV hot spots. He said that a harm reduction strategy is needed.

From the Asian Pacific Network of Sex Workers, Khartini Slamah said it was very important, again in terms of harm minimisation, to have access to confidential HIV treatment, and that prevention and inclusion policies are needed. We need to ensure that there is sex worker involvement, particularly women, in prevention and treatment programs. The denial of drug use in the sex worker industry is a huge obstacle. From the Global Fund, Mauro Guarinieri, a civil society officer, detailed how after 30 years, despite \$US1 billion being invested in HIV reduction every year, only one in 20 drug users in Asia has access to substitution treatments and only one in seven has access to clean needles. On the positive side, harm reduction and peer education works, but more is needed.

One of the most fascinating speakers was Mariam Claeson from the World Bank. She detailed how there is a nexus between policymakers and world economic outcomes. That is the very reason the World Bank and donors have an economic interest in getting drug and HIV policies right. There was a big World Bank presence at this conference. Its attitude is that it needs to make money work for those who are vulnerable and at risk.

The secretary general of the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development, Dr Pinit Kullavanijaya, is a senator from Thailand and a colleague of Barry Marshall and our other Nobel Prize winners in that field of medicine. He detailed, from the position of being a parliamentarian in Asia and also a medical doctor, how harm reduction has proven to be effective since its widespread introduction in the early 1980s, and how a large reason for its success was the fact that it was human rights based. The World Health Organization’s major study found that in 52 cities that operated without needle exchange and syringe provision, HIV infection rates had increased by an average of 5.9 per cent a year. In the 29 cities that had needle exchange and syringe provision arrangements, HIV infection rates decreased by an average of 5.8 per cent a year. Vietnam, one of the countries that have very hard and stringent policies on drug sellers and people trafficking drugs, has also moved towards harm reduction strategies for drug users, after years of having had a punishment response regime. There is no evidence to show that harm reduction leads to increased drug use; that was the continued mantra of both medical experts and public policy experts. Dr Pinit also said that parliamentarians need to work towards the eventual decriminalisation of drug use.

One of the most engaging speakers was Hon Madam Chong Eng, who is a member of Parliament for Penang in the Malaysian Parliament. Her view is that one has to convince the majority of the community that harm prevention policies will benefit the whole community. Members of Parliament must represent the majority, so they have to show how the majority will benefit. The majority will benefit from getting rid of disease in jails and reducing the number of presentations at hospitals. In Malaysia today more housewives than sex workers have HIV. The general population has been excluded from harm reduction policies, and many people in the broader community are in denial about these issues.

One of the co-sponsors of the conference is the Asian Network of People who Use Drugs, and another speaker at the conference was Jimmy Dorabji from the Burnet Institute, which operates out of Australia. His point was that moral assertions are made about illegal drug use that are not made about alcohol and tobacco use, and that people who use drugs do not have the will or the assistance to tackle associated problems in the way that many people who use alcohol and tobacco do. People who use drugs have a greater need for civil society.

Tripti Tandon from the Lawyers Collective in India spoke on policy and treatment environments. Major criminalisation policies across some Asian countries reinforce a culture of blameworthiness. This leads to a situation where doctors do not blame lung cancer sufferers who have used tobacco, but an environment of blame exists in some fields connected with drug users.

The other big issue to consider—we often forget it here in Western Australia—is the effect of drug use on spouses and partners. That is why harm reduction programs are very important, because in addition to the harm

being done to drug users, quite often the larger harm is done to the families and partners of drug users. In Nepal, for example, some 70 per cent of drug users are married. Across South Asia there are very high rates of drug use, and when HIV and hepatitis B are introduced into the mix of secretive drug use, the rate of transmission within marriage becomes very high. A couple of speakers concentrated on the issue of drug use by young people. I want to refer to this now, because I will be referring later to a submission from Mission Australia, Perth, that was made to a current inquiry by one of our parliamentary committees. An interesting contribution to the "Response Beyond Borders" conference was made by Himakshi Piplani and Dave Burrows from Australia. They said that the raw statistic is that every day, 700 new young people are being infected with HIV. This came from a review of data from 17 countries through the AIDS projects management group for the UNICEF Asia and Pacific Shared Services Centre. The preliminary findings concentrated on users between the ages of 10 and 24 years. The study used very small sample sizes, and we were, therefore, cautioned about the validity of using such a study. What is coming out from that research is that HIV is 20 times more prevalent in at-risk kids. Therefore, particularly in areas such as Asia, we should not be wasting money on the general population in schools and on elite students. We should be targeting at-risk people, because they are the ones who need to get the message. The research shows also that young injecting drug users are hugely more at risk. Therefore, we need to start working with 12 to 16-year-olds on prevention. Of course this will be very confronting, not only for parliamentarians, but also for our broader community. Yet if we are dinkum about the rights of children, we need to accept that children, particularly 12-year-olds who are using drugs, are voiceless and disempowered. We are ignoring those children if we ignore their drug use. These young people are at risk. However, they are not able to make independent medical decisions. That raises huge liability issues when it comes to needle provision, for example. Therefore, this presents some very important and complex issues for us as parliamentarians and policymakers. We need to debate those issues fully and openly.

One of the sessions at the conference was on harm reduction. That session was directed particularly at parliamentarians. We were given an overview by an officer from the Global Fund about the epidemiology of HIV and injecting drug use in Asia. One of the speakers at that session was Dr Suresh Kumar, a psychiatrist, who spoke about how drug users with HIV who engage in sex have a higher incidence of viral hepatitis and tuberculosis.

The challenges of formulating good policy and of putting that policy into practice were addressed by Mariam Claeson, a Swedish doctor who is also the program coordinator for HIV-AIDS at the World Bank. Her theme was that we need to target at-risk cohorts. She also made the point that it is wrong to use the South African doomsday model in Asia, because in Asia, unlike in parts of Africa, HIV has not wiped out a whole generation of the skilled workforce. The recurring theme at the conference was that we need to base local knowledge and advice on strict evidence. Another theme was that we need to use cost-effective strategies. These strategies need to be targeted at ministers for finance and treasurers, because in Asia, as in most communities, it is the worst off and the most poor who are most at risk. Of course there are also huge welfare costs if drug use and HIV infection are not addressed. On a broad fiscal cost analysis, it is much better financially to fund prevention rather than treatments. Of course, as we all know, people are not demonstrating in the streets for clean needles, but they are demonstrating for treatments once there is an explosion in HIV. We must get the agenda back onto funding prevention.

Sometimes the flavour of the month is detoxification programs, yet the medical research indicates that they are a waste. Ninety per cent of people go back onto drugs, particularly those in a prison population. Unfortunately, the reality is that prisons are often the places where injecting is taught and the epidemics start there. In terms of cost-effectiveness, detoxification is not valid but oral substitution therapies are. As an aside, it is interesting to recall that it was really only when parliamentarians moved to change to oral rehydration, rather than the doctors and the medical fraternity leading the charge, that child diarrhoea was tackled and addressed in widespread populations. The message coming back is that parliamentarians, not doctors, are the change agents in many situations. The evidence in Afghanistan is that \$1 invested now saves \$4 later. Communities within Asia should be proud that Asia is 98 per cent HIV free. We need to build on successes. According to the World Bank, we need to focus on science and compassion.

We also had a session on treatment reforms by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Dr Juana Tomas-Rossello is the coordinator of the UNODC. We need to be reminded that drug users have an addiction disease. No matter how much drug users are punished, unless the brain disease of addiction is treated, they will keep using drugs. What is needed is to reach out to those who are not accessing treatments. If we sit back and examine this, we see that this is nothing less than that which is expected for the treatment of any other disease, so why are we not treating the disease of addiction and the disease of drug addiction in the same way? Kunal Kishore, who is the project coordinator of prevention programs at the UNODC regional office in Delhi, gave feedback on the importance of funding from AusAID. South India is celebrating 10 years of direct aid from Australia for harm

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

reduction and prevention programs. The Maldives also reported how important Australia had been in training experts and providing policy advice in health, leading to a growth in harm reduction programs.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr J.N. HYDE: One of the worrying aspects was reports from non-government organisations operating in Cambodia that harm reduction was being downplayed as a magic ginseng detoxification cure that had been brought in from Vietnam by some people with strong financial links and that this was forming the base of government policies. NGOs are not getting the same cooperation that they previously had been getting in Cambodia, and so their view is that Cambodia is no longer tolerating harm reduction strategies. There is an important message about how a change in government or a change in government policy can lead to a real deterioration in health outcomes. In Myanmar—as we stand by and let the junta have its illegal so-called election later this year—the rate of HIV acquired through sexual transmission by drug users is 67 per cent. It is estimated that there are 475 000 drug users in Burma, and, of those, 75 000 are intravenous drug users—a prevalence in that small cohort of 43 per cent. In Burma, drug users are excluded from HIV-AIDS services if they mention that they are using drugs or if their drug use is known.

Probably one of the greatest speakers at the conference was Datuk Zahman, who had been a very senior policeman in Malaysia. He was a very tough-on-crime, zero-tolerance policeman who was moved sideways by the government into running the prison system. After dealing with the locking up of and summary justice for criminals for 30 years, he suddenly got to go into prisons and saw just what prisons were doing regarding drug use. As the director of prisons, he changed the whole attitude towards drug use. Drug use within prisons in Malaysia was seen to be a health issue. Again, this replicates the situation in Vietnam. Vietnam has a very hard legal code for drug traffickers, but that is separated from the issue of drug users—drug use being seen as a health issue. Vietnam has introduced and is funding methadone replacement within community centres, and there is less use of a centralised compulsory centre. Vietnam is seeing its figures for drug use, including drug use within prisons, go down drastically. Therefore, both Thailand and Malaysia are moving drug treatment towards public health models.

One of the members of Parliament from India, Oscar Fernandes, said, accurately, that drugs are a scourge, that drugs have led to the spread of HIV and that the priority must be to treat drug addiction non-criminally. Later this year India will be introducing decriminalisation legislation.

One aspect of the “Response Beyond Borders” conference was that it was one of the first major conferences that had parliamentarians and drug users working equally, so we were able to get the perspective of drug users, and drug users were able to get the perspective of parliamentarians and policymakers. What came through time and again was that prevention and treatment—all services for drug users—have to be accessible, they have to be voluntary, they have to be comprehensive, they have to be evidence based and they also have to be compassionate. Hepatitis C is a huge, growing issue, even here in Western Australia. We know that with a 20-year time lag on hepatitis C, the real explosion in hepatitis C cases here in WA will not be seen until most of us have left Parliament.

Doctor Tariq Chaudhry is an MP in Pakistan. His overview of 20 years' work was that the lack of community involvement in some countries such as Pakistan and an over-focus on non-evidence-based services had held back treatments and good health outcomes. However, he said that we need to be able to put harm reduction in context for MPs, and MPs must be able to harmonise public health, public security, human rights and development approaches. The key message to come through was that for MPs to be able to successfully advocate for harm reduction, they need, firstly, solid, credible, convincing arguments; secondly, models that have worked; and, thirdly, evidence based on good data.

The confusion between some non-government organisations that are purely advocacy groups and other non-judgemental groups that are involved in the health outcomes and harm reduction is also evident. We need to deal with that issue. Having been parliamentary secretary to the Minister for Health in Western Australia, it was really interesting that, in the Asian context, there was perhaps a greater understanding that advocacy had to go hand in hand with getting the health outcomes right. AusAID implemented a new strategy last year that reinforced harm reduction, and it is funding major projects in Indonesia and South Asia. It was wonderful to listen to Sumatran Muslim female members of Parliament and doctors talking about the importance of AusAID and harm reduction strategies.

It is important that this government, which has been in power for almost two years and is looking at making changes to drug legislation this year, talks to the Minister for Health and the independent experts in the Drug and Alcohol Office who know that harm minimisation works and that criminalising drug use does not work. We can refer back to the 1909 International Opium Commission, since which we have had 100 years of punishment-

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

based prohibition and deterrence to drugs, which has not worked. Drug use has never been stronger across the world, and it has never been cheaper to obtain drugs.

I am sure that when we get to this legislation later in the year some people in this chamber will raise the issue of if the source of drugs is removed, the problem will clear up. There is only one place in the world where removing the source of drugs has worked, and that was in one of the Latin American countries, where they had a huge, huge crackdown on cocaine; it totally went from being a cocaine-using community to becoming a heroin-using community. In early 2009, Portugal brought in major harm reduction policies, and what some people would call decriminalisation; the result has been a huge drop in people being sent to prison, a huge drop in heroin deaths, and a huge drop in associated health problems. All the research has told us that every dollar spent on methadone saves \$25 on health treatments. If the government is really dinkum about cutting the health budget in this state, it would look at more prevention strategies, particularly for drug use, which would result in a decrease in spending on crime reduction.

I have referred to this conference in this speech because of the Premier's Statement today, which ignored the harm that drug use can do to users, their families and our society. The Premier's Statement ignored the evidence that criminalising drug use and imposing harsher penalties does not minimise crime. Illicit drug offences continue to be the largest offence type in WA, with 496 indictment lodgements for the year ended December 2009—an almost 17 per cent increase on the previous year. That increase occurred under the tough-on-talk rhetoric reign of the Barnett government, yet in the Premier's speech today he congratulated himself, stating —

Western Australians gave this Government a mandate at the 2008 election to reduce antisocial behaviour and crime in this State. We have accepted that challenge and the results so far are positive.

In the first full year of government there was an 8.5 per cent drop in overall reported offences against the person and property.

No mention is made there of the biggest driver of offences, which is illicit drug offences. The same government that does not understand the problem wants the WA community to trust it to solve the complex issue of drug use.

I refer to the current inquiry of the Education and Health Standing Committee into the adequacy and appropriateness of prevention and treatment services for alcohol and illicit drug problems in Western Australia. I will refer quickly to a submission from Mission Australia. It recommends that the evidence base, content, implementation and resourcing, including teacher training for health education and other interventions on alcohol and illicit drugs for school-age students, must be adhered to and increased. Mission Australia is recommending harm minimisation. It wants support for early intervention and prevention programs for young people experiencing family alcohol and other drug issues in both regional and metropolitan WA. Mission Australia's argument is that harm minimisation focuses on the reduction of any harm arising from drug use and that this approach realistically recognises that young people will try to use alcohol and drugs and aims to minimise the risks to them by providing accurate information about possible harm. Clearly, this state must reinforce its policy in support of harm minimisation.

MS A.R. MITCHELL (Kingsley) [8.52 pm]: It gives me great pleasure to make my Premier's Statement response at the commencement of this 2010 parliamentary year. I have been very pleased with this Liberal-National government, particularly because I see that decisions have been made for the short term and for the long term and I see work being done on large and small projects. At the same time, I see that this government has been very diligent and effective in managing the state of Western Australia. While I was preparing this address, I looked back over the past 12 months and tried to work out what was different from previous years. It occurred to me that the most significant change was the attitude of the people. There was a much more positive approach to what was going on. There was a lot more self-confidence and belief in what they were doing and how they were doing it. There is much more of a can-do attitude, a let's-give-it-a-go approach compared with what we had previously, where it was much more careful and very cautious; in fact, it was a don't-do-anything approach. This has been very, very refreshing. My approach has always been "let's look at how we can do something." I am delighted when I am working with people or an organisation who reflect the same approach. Let us see how we can do something to get the outcome we are looking for. An example last year was in a briefing from the gentleman implementing the four-hour rule at Fremantle Hospital. How refreshing it was when he said, "Sure, we'd love a whole lot more beds, but in fact we could use the number of beds we have more effectively." That whole approach was so different and so refreshing. I must admit that I still have to work with a number of places that demonstrate the "it can't be done" or the "we don't want to do anything different" approach. I have to say that I love that challenge, and I look forward to working with those people and organisations in the future.

I will give members some examples of how the approach has changed within my electorate. Firstly, I would like to talk about education, because there are a number of factors in that. I refer to the two high schools in my electorate, firstly, Greenwood Senior High School and some examples from the recent 2009 year 12 examination

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY - Tuesday, 23 February 2010]

p28d-64a

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

results. In the stage 2 and 3 courses, which are undertaken by university-bound students, the students in this scheme improved in 10 of their subjects, which meant that 24 per cent of students had one or more scaled marks in excess of 75 per cent. That is an increase from 11.9 per cent in 2009, and an increase of 12.1 per cent overall. That is fantastic for that school.

Woodvale Senior High School had 251 year 12 students in 2009. That is not unusual; it is a very large year 12 cohort. One hundred and twenty-nine students sat the tertiary entrance examination and 114 students completed full vocational education and training qualifications. The school received the top public school award for 2009 from the Department of Education and Training for achieving outstanding results. I will speak about Woodvale Senior High School because it has prided itself over the past few years on having 100 per cent graduation and it has worked very, very hard to do that. The school made a conscious decision last year to not go to the lengths it had previously; it would forgo that ability to say it had 100 per cent graduation because it did not believe that it was doing the best thing for some of its students. The ones who were doing the right work and getting through were doing it, but the school was actually spoonfeeding people to get the last group over the line to claim the 100 per cent graduation rate, which actually probably was not the best thing for those students and certainly did not encourage the other students to do the right thing and get work done and completed on time. Therefore, it was a fairly major conscious decision but the school believes that it has made the right decision for the long term.

None of my schools were in the first intake of independent public schools although they had applied, but once again that has not stopped them. Obviously, they are pleased that applications have opened again but what was refreshing to me, particularly when meeting with them at the start of the year and the end of last year, is what they were going to do in spite of not being selected but how they could do things and move forward. I actually disagree with the member for Nollamara who said that schools needed to review, do an assessment and check on something or other before they did something else. I previously worked in a government in that situation; we did a report on something, then we reviewed the report, and of course then we had to evaluate the review on the report and by that stage we would need to do another report, so things did not get done. I am actually a person who likes to get things done, so for me to go around to these schools has been very refreshing.

I refer once again to the schools in the Greenwood precinct. Last year Greenwood Senior High School commenced some integrating work with one of the local primary schools; classes going up to the high school and not so many teachers going down. That was highly successful, so it wants to extend that this year into more subjects, particularly in maths and science, and to the other feeder primary schools in the area. It wants to create an educational precinct and it is starting the process already. Woodvale Senior High School, as I said, is proud of its academic record but it is also very cognisant of the vocational education and training component. It already has very firm partnerships with the very successful West Coast Institute of Training so that its students have all options available to them. The principal of Creaney Primary School said the other week that the school's plan is to create a centre that the students can come to early in the morning and stay right through the day and leave when their parents pick them up so that students do not have to go to different places for child care before and after school. The school will work towards that and it will be successful. Goollelal Primary School has a lot of students with special needs and provides an outstanding environment within mainstream education. It is achieving excellent results working outside the boundaries that have probably been set by the rules and regulations from the department.

I move to another area in my electorate—believe it or not, I actually have a residential development starting up in Woodvale this year. The suburb of Woodvale is 30 years old. It is very much house-and-land 750 square metre blocks; people are lucky if they get something smaller, perhaps a duplex size. The new subdivision starting is the last land available in Woodvale. I am excited because it has small blocks. This is fantastic because it is an opportunity now for many of my residents who, rather than having to move out of Woodvale if they want to get into a smaller sized block, can do that within the suburb they have known and loved for a long time. At the same time, people who want to move in to Woodvale but do not necessarily want to go to the full house-and-land size property will also have that opportunity. The subdivision is called the Chianti Private Estate and I will go into a bit more on that later. It is right on the edge of Yellagonga Regional Park so the work that has been done environmentally for the development of this estate is also fantastic. All the houses that will be built have very specific sustainability requirements, which reflect what the community wants and, once again, believes it can do. It is expected that the site works will begin in April with construction underway later in the year. I mentioned that it is called Chianti Private Estate and the reason I am pleased about that is that it reflects the Italian history of the area. Many members know a little about the northern suburbs and Italian migrants featured very prominently in the northern area. I would particularly like to acknowledge the late Ezio Luisini, who provided many, many opportunities to Italian migrants in the area over many years. Luisini arrived in Western Australia in 1908 and made his first purchase of land in the area in order to plant a vineyard. He was noted for his primary

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

business, which was a drapery and supply store in William Street, Perth, but he was also well-known for selling his wine to all the households and small businesses around town and well into the country. The vineyard continued to expand. At one stage it evolved into the largest privately owned vineyard in Western Australia. The proposed redevelopment of his former winery in Woodvale into a multifunctional facility would be a fantastic testament to this man and certainly provide a significant benefit to many local residents and visitors.

Another residential area that has very much provided a can-do approach in the past 12 months is the Cherokee Village Tourist Park, which is in my electorate. Members may recall that in late 2008 the Kingsway Tourist and Caravan Park was due to close. The park contained long-term homes. It was quite a concern at that time, and still is quite a concern. It looked at what it could do to help the people out who were going to find themselves in a very difficult situation. I would also like to recognise the efforts of the member for Wanneroo in this—he and I were able to assist these people. I am very pleased to say that the Cherokee Village Tourist Park was able to plan for 25 park homes to be relocated there. As of this Saturday, 25 homes will be located in the Cherokee Village Tourist Park. That is because the owners and operators said, “We can do something and we will do something.”

I now refer to transport. Firstly, we have two train stations in the area—one at Whitfords and one at Greenwood. New parking bays are currently being built. We will have 200 new bays at Whitfords and 170 at Greenwood. That will certainly assist patrons who use the train system for travel.

I also refer to bus services. I was very pleased to demonstrate to the Minister for Transport the lack of bus services that travel east–west in my area and the difficulty that causes people when they want to travel east–west. Commuters have to travel well south to go north–west or north–east. It would be of great benefit to an elderly person if he or she was able to travel 800 metres in an easterly direction to visit a shopping centre.

Mr J.E. McGrath: It happens in a lot of areas; all bus services heading into the city.

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: It certainly does. My constituents go to train stations.

We got more of a “we don’t need to change” approach, but that was certainly not from the minister. I have accepted the challenge. With the input I have had from local residents, who make these trips regularly and can provide me with very practical options and solutions, I am confident that some progress will be made this year in one of those areas at least.

The third component of my transport area is the expansion of the Mitchell Freeway. It is a fantastic freeway system. I travel it many times—not every day but certainly often. Once again I need to support not just the people on my side, but people who live east, west and north of the freeway. We all see each other every morning or every night, and we must not forget these people. We need to extend the freeway. It is important, but we need to remember that there is a section of the Mitchell Freeway that reduces from three lanes to two lanes and remains two lanes until it comes out again at three lanes in the new section. If members listen to the Main Roads traffic report every morning, they will hear that it is slow going from Ocean Reef Road through to Warwick Road, and then heavy through to Scarborough Beach Road. On the way home, it is slow from Vincent Street all the way north. This is happening earlier in the morning and earlier in the afternoon, going later at night. We need to consider people who have been there for a long time, who put up with it, but it is only going to get worse. I will be advocating for an expansion and I certainly look forward to achieving that down the track.

I must say, though, within my electorate we are still experiencing antisocial behaviour: graffiti; hooning; attacks against innocent people; unacceptable language; rubbish left everywhere; and drugs and alcohol. I guess this behaviour was highlighted to me recently in an arson attack on a local service station, which really shocked the community. I summarise this behaviour as a lack of respect for people and for other people’s property. I am pleased that the people in my electorate do not accept this behaviour and want to do something about it. We have talked before about the sense of belonging, the sense of connectedness and the sense of responsibility—matters that I know all members of this chamber believe in.

In conclusion, I must say that I look back on 2009 with some satisfaction and that I am quite pleased with things, but I am really looking forward to 2010 with great anticipation. For me the future of Western Australia under the leadership of this Liberal–National government does indeed look very good and I am very much looking forward to being part of that.

MRS C.A. MARTIN (Kimberley) [9.05 pm]: I rise to make my contribution in response to the Premier’s Statement. I thought I would start by mentioning a couple of things that the previous government started and had done a lot of work on prior to the current government’s coming to office. The Ord irrigation scheme, of course, has been around for 40 years, and just recently got some federal funding to get it kick-started, which is great. The Oakajee project speaks for itself; it is going along really well. It is one of those things for which the Premier deserves a feather in his cap because, let us face it, where credit is due, we should give it. Then of course there is

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

the Gorgon project, which has started in the time of this government, but, let us face it, a lot of work on it was done before the time of this government. That is another feather in the Premier's cap. How long has the Browse Basin project been around and on everybody's agenda? Is it 46 years finally? The Ord project has taken 50 years. Things have taken a long time to get to where they are. However, I have to acknowledge that these things are happening, so I give credit where it is due. I am doing it, and I am not grinding my teeth or anything! I think they have been done very well.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Good on you!

Mrs C.A. MARTIN: The other thing, of course, is Indigenous economic participation, which was mentioned in the Premier's speech; he has made a serious contribution towards it. It is something that all governments have tried to make an impact on and, again, it has been mentioned. I think it is all great.

There are a couple of things that I am a little disappointed about. There are no freeways and roads in my electorate like the freeway to Bunbury. I think it is pretty deadly—I just want that on the record—but it is a great road all the way to Bunbury. We do not have a lot of roads like that up my way. We could do with one, by the way, to Cape Leveque. There are only 96 kilometres left to complete, but I put on the record that we could do with double lanes on both sides of the road. In that way we could open it up for employment —

Dr K.D. Hames: Absolutely, although some people don't want to.

Mrs C.A. MARTIN: A minority.

In that way we could open it up for tourism and employment—all sorts of options that we have tried in the past—but if we cannot get people in there safely, they will not go there. I am going to talk about what we could do in my electorate.

Last year I spent a bit of time in Exmouth. There was a really friendly community there and it was the best time I have had. I thought I would try somewhere different for a holiday. I went out to the national park there. Of course there are bitumen roads to all the places where people want to go. If they want to go to Turquoise Bay, it is bitumen; if they want water, there is a tap, which sounds good to me; and if people want to camp somewhere, there is a campsite and wood there. The national park is therefore managed in such a way that many people can go there and not cause any damage to the environment. If people want to go for a swim and have a look at a stingray or something, it is all there. It is fantastic. There will be probably another 10 000 people living up my way, especially around Broome. To put these sorts of projects in place, we need vision, and to get a project started, people have to talk about it. I would love to see a road built out to Crab Creek so that there will be no impact on the native scrub or the wildlife and so that my fishing spots are not upset. There are some really important sacred sites out there, so people do not want to go near those. It is very important to have that vision about how to provide access for tourists. If it can be done in Ningaloo, surely it can be done in Broome. There is more to Broome than Cable Beach. We are striving to change the way some things are managed; for example, cars on Cable Beach. Why should every car on the planet have access to Cable Beach? I think it is wrong. That does not happen at other beaches. During the tourism season up to 700 vehicles drive onto the beach at any one time. Can members imagine what damage they are doing? That is a real issue. A bit of vision is needed.

I have a little list here of what I would like, so I thought I would read it out as my wish list. First of all, we need some land to be set aside for the development of a shopping centre in Wyndham. That light development is very important and it is urgent. The port represents \$30-odd million worth of state assets, so we need to put some money into sorting it out. We do it every now and then but it has become urgent now so a lot more money needs to be put into it. There are still big potholes in the port road, so it needs to be sorted out. We also need an efficient and effective ambulance service from Wyndham to Kununurra. We all know that the nature of services change, but as they change we still need to provide a reasonable service to people. The ambulance service is very important. If volunteers cannot do the work maybe the health department needs to look at it.

Dr K.D. Hames: We have a paramedic in Kununurra.

Mrs C.A. MARTIN: I know, but we need a remedy because the issue is going around in circles, and while that is happening people are not getting the services they need. As I said, this is just my wish list; I am putting it out there.

In each town is the issue of children not being safe at home who need a sanctuary. Do we need to take kids away from home? I do not believe we do. Those kids are not safe at home for a couple of days a fortnight. That is when they should be able to make an informed decision that they are safer at a sanctuary for a couple of days. Why do we want to remove children when they are not safe for only a small amount of time? It will make parents realise that once they come under the scrutiny of the authorities, if they do not look after their kids, they will lose them. Every time we talk about places such as hostels we are talking about a permanent arrangement for children. I do not believe that is necessary. I worked in welfare for 20 years; I knew how to use the law to try

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

to force people to be good parents. It was basically a matter of threatening people to get them to look after their kids. There is no panacea. However, when we do nothing at all, the threat to the children has an impact on their lives—on their futures. So what do we do? We do not do nothing but we do not take the children away either. There are other ways of dealing with the issue. If it has not worked for the 20 years in which I have been involved as a professional, it will not work for the next 20 years. When I was growing up I was removed from my family, but I would not stay in a foster home. I ended up with family again. All I needed was to be with family. If there is a family with four kids who can take another two kids if another room is built onto the house, why not arrange that? Would it not be cheaper? Would it not provide a permanent solution? I am simply suggesting a bit of time be taken to create some vision and to look outside the box.

We know also that we have a housing crisis. There are 400 people in Broome on the Homeswest waiting list. A lot of those people have been on the community development employment program for ever, but they are no longer on the CDEP. A couple of people I know have been on the CDEP for 20 years. That has been perceived as full-time employment; they have never worked anywhere else, but they do not have any real superannuation. They have no future. Some have a job, but they must now move out of their homes. That does not seem right to me. The majority of work in my electorate office involves dealing with Homeswest. What is that about? It is about single parents seeking housing to raise their children in and not having to live in overcrowded conditions. We hear all these things, but we never talk about poverty or housing for people who live in poverty. I can show members a few houses that have 30 people living in them. However, they are built to house five people, not 30. It is no wonder that the bloody thing crumbles around their ears. Can members understand what I mean? If a house was built for 30 people it would be robust. It would take the traffic. However, when a conventional house is built to house only five people of course there will be problems. This is not rocket science, is it? I do not think it is. An alternative can be found for people working in Broome who cannot afford to buy a house. Currently, a reasonable house in Broome to bring up one's kids in costs \$700 000. I do not think there is anything available in Broome for under \$600 000. Who can afford that? These people have to live somewhere. There is a boom taking place up there. Do we need more land or another form of accommodation? Does the government need to lease land from landowners? What will we do? We do not want another Burrup or what happened in Hedland to occur in Broome. So many different things could be done.

Another item on my wish list involves Kununurra. It has a school that is 40-odd years old. The community is over it and they need a new school. The government cannot keep patching up patches. In the end the school will fall down around people's ears. If we are in a boom, how about the government putting some investment into education at that level?

Another issue I have involves Fitzroy Crossing. Every time I see the poor, old Treasurer I ask him for a new police station at Fitzroy Crossing. Why is a new police station needed in Fitzroy Crossing? If members go up there I ask them to check out the police station. It is terrible and the police are expected to work in those conditions. It is really a horrible place to go.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker): I ask members to keep down the side conversations.

Mr J.E. McGrath: Have things improved in Fitzroy Crossing since the liquor bans?

Mrs C.A. MARTIN: Fitzroy Crossing is fine. However, Broome and Derby are not doing very well because people moved from Fitzroy Crossing to those towns. When it comes to Fitzroy Crossing, it has a beautiful school and hospital.

Dr E. Constable: Fitzroy Crossing has a fantastic school.

Mrs C.A. MARTIN: It has. Fitzroy Crossing has some great infrastructure and some really good people. The good thing is that the people there who are non-alcoholics are happy. The alcoholics are not there. In my opinion the problem has not really been dealt with. Members know that I am a social worker and I must give myself a plug. If we do not play the game—the game is to, first, identify the problem. What is the problem? Addictions. We have heard about drug abuse, opium and any other substance members can name, but there is one legal drug that causes so many problems. I am referring to the red can of beer that is called “wife basher”. I cannot remember what it is called because I do not drink beer. Members would be amazed at the number of Aboriginal people I know who do not drink. Anyway I am referring to beer that is in a red can. The blokes tell me it is called “wife basher” and now they are on light beer they are not bashing anymore! A couple of fellows made a joke about it.

Mr C.C. Porter: It is Emu Export.

Several members interjected.

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

Mrs C.A. MARTIN: Members can decide what it is called. I do not drink it, so I do not care. If that is what alcohol does to people, it is wrong. We have to deal with this problem in the same way that we have to deal with binge drinking. Since the introduction of alcopops the kids buy bottles of neat alcohol so that they can get drunk before they go into town. I saw my kids doing this and I told them they could not do it. They told me that they could not afford to buy drinks at the pub. I told them that they were idiots to drink. That is by the by. Alcohol is a terrible thing.

Dr K.D. Hames: Did they listen to you?

Mrs C.A. MARTIN: No.

Dr K.D. Hames: My kids don't.

Mrs C.A. MARTIN: One of my kids has been grounded as a result. He is 21. It is a bit hard because I am not there all the time to police it.

If members think about it, alcohol abuse is caused by a minority of people. That minority of people are the ones we notice most. We have dog orders. We could put a dog order on somebody if that person kept misbehaving. If somebody cannot behave, let us do it. Have a think about it. If 40 people are sitting around having a drink and two of them are playing up, what do we do? Do we treat all 40 people the same because two of them are carrying on? Therein the problem lies. We are not dealing with the addictions.

We have a Minister for Mental Health, and what is an addiction if it is not a mental health issue? I am putting this out because, as I said, let us get out of this box that we are in. It has not worked out; it is never going to work. We have a place called the Milliya Rumurra Alcohol Treatment Centre, which is just outside Broome. It has been an alcohol rehabilitation centre forever. It is the only one we have got. We have tried bush camps and all that sort of stuff, but they have not worked. Milliya Rumurra has been there forever and it works, but it can have about only 15 or 16 people at a time. We all know that only 50 per cent of those people who go there have a good outcome, because wherever they have come from nothing has changed, so they will go back into the same situation and whatever. We are still not dealing with the addiction. We have an opportunity to do this if we identify it for what it is. It is a blight on our community and it is a blight on our families. It is a legal drug; people can buy it. It is not like ganja or any of that stuff. I take the point. I have seen what ganja has done to people. About 500 people in my community in Broome, including my brother, were affected by ganja. He was smoking when he was young. It has caused him brain damage because he had a previous illness. What has it done to him? He is a 40-year-old who, unfortunately, will never have a real life. But he is not the only one; there are hundreds of people suffering from the same thing. They then drink alcohol and it all starts again. They all have cycles. Some have a six-month cycle that is really tight, and every six months they are going to flip out. Others may take a couple of years to do a full cycle. But when we really, really think about this, we are not dealing with the problem. The problem is addiction.

When the Premier said that the government has a Minister for Mental Health, this should not be anything to do with the Department of Health or treated alone; it should be to do with mental health and services that are already there in the communities. We have mental health teams in most of the communities and most of the big towns. That is what we should be using. We need more rehabilitation centres. At the moment if people suffer from anything in Broome, there are 15 or 16 places that they can go to; otherwise, they are shifted off to Darwin.

[Member's time extended.]

Mrs C.A. MARTIN: I just think that this is the opportunity to do all this. I had better get back to talking about infrastructure.

Dr K.D. Hames: If you get the chance to talk about the problems at Oombulgurri to me afterwards —

Mrs C.A. MARTIN: The problems at Oombulgurri?

Dr K.D. Hames: Perhaps we will talk later after you have finished.

Mrs C.A. MARTIN: I think that it does not matter where people are, whether they are in Gascoyne, Carnarvon, Newman, Kununurra, Oombulgurri or Kalumburu—Kalumburu is a bit better—we are still not dealing with the people who are addicts. The bingies are fine. It has really been good for them. A lot of the binge drinkers have distanced themselves and are starting to come back to their communities. It has been a brilliant thing to see these people. For a week when they are bingeing they disappear, they are not part of their families and they change everything. When they come back they are fine. Where are the people who suffer from alcohol addiction? They are wherever they can get their hit. I have seen a couple of people just recently who have tried to help themselves by getting off it. Have members ever seen anybody go through physical withdrawal from their drug of choice? It

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

is terrible to see. They have cold sweats and shaking. It is really scary. The worst part about it is that they do not want to go to the doctors, because those people do not want to admit anything.

To its credit, the mental health team will come in and try to help, and because it is family, they will let them know. They cannot be taken to hospital; they do not want to go because they do not want to admit that they suffer from this addiction. Wherever poverty is rife, an addiction of one sort or another will exist. It is part of how people survive. That is another thing: how do these drugs get into remote communities? I get phone calls all the time from people who say to me, "I know who's selling the drugs," and I say, "Well, please ring the police," but they will not do it because the police cannot protect them in their communities. Since the Gordon inquiry and the construction of multifunctional police facilities in those communities, the nature of the world has changed for those people. In places like Bidyadanga there are 1 200 or 1 400 people, and now they actually have a cop shop that works! That means that the people in that community now feel safe because there is actually law and order. Some of these communities have existed for more than 70 years without law and order. Is it any wonder that there are problems there? These multifunctional police facilities have done more than just provide infrastructure and a few jobs in these remote communities; they have actually provided people with some hope—not just a little hope, but a lot. Members should go out to Kalumburu or Bidyadanga and see the difference, or Balgo—that is another place. These things work. We all took it for granted that Aboriginal communities did not need them, but for all that time these people have been suffering—women, children and the men who were not party to the bad behaviour. I say to the government: if something works, keep looking after it; do not de-fund it, because it is working.

Dr K.D. Hames: We won't be de-funding them—we need more.

Mrs C.A. MARTIN: That is what I am saying. Just make sure they remain the priority that they are. They have only been there for a few years, and the culture in the communities takes a few years to change. If things are done properly and we maintain those services, people will come home. I met a couple of ladies down here in Perth who said that they were going home; to me, that is great. They came down with their kids for medical reasons, but they did not want to go home. They were hanging out for a while, but now they are going to go home, so that means that something is working. Everybody can take credit for that, because everybody supported it. When we look at everything that works, the outcomes are great. We need a facility in Oombulgarri; I know that things have been really difficult there.

Dr K.D. Hames: The troubles are a bit different there. A few people are back in the community and everyone's left.

Mrs C.A. MARTIN: Yes, but this is what I am saying.

Dr K.D. Hames: The police are still there.

Mrs C.A. MARTIN: The police need support out there to do their job, and not just there; there are a couple of other places. They are in an isolated situation. Where they actually have child protection workers, they are doing a great job. It is when they do not that issues arise. The social worker of the year last year was Rosalie Dwyer from Warburton. That woman is a legend; she is out there actually doing the work. If I remember, she started her working career out there as a schoolteacher. She has had a long association with the goldfields. It is those sorts of people out there now who are making a difference. I think it is working. However, there needs to be rehabilitation services for alcohol abuse and alcoholics. People who have an addiction need a hand. I was addicted to cigarettes for 39 years. Do members have any idea how hard it is to give up smoking without Nicorette? However bad the physiological effects are of having the sweats and thinking, "I need a smoke," it must be worse for grog. I have seen people drive 100 kilometres for grog. Why would anyone do that? Why not just say, "When I go into town next week, we might have a drink," or something. That is another thing: people drinking until they are drunk. There is a culture of this. It is not just Aboriginal people.

I went down to the Roebuck Bay Hotel with my kids one night. One of them had turned 21. I drove them because that way, I knew they were safe. If they got too sozzled, I could give them a fresh head and take them home. I looked at all these kids and they were all dancing. I was thinking how gorgeous they were as they were drinking water. I thought that was great. Why were they drinking water? I did not know why. I said to the kids, "Why can't you be like them? They're just drinking water." The kids looked at me and said, "You don't want us like that, mum." When I asked why, they said they were on cocaine and taking ecstasy tablets. These kids explained to me that these other kids needed water to keep them cool. I never understood anything like that. When I did my social work degree, I did not have anything to do with kids who were doing that sort of stuff. I am not talking about two or three; I am talking about 30 or 40 of them. I was thinking how gorgeous they were, non-drinkers.

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

Things are bad. If it is not alcohol, which is a legal drug, it is illegal drugs. Where do these kids get them from? I am pretty sure that they do not go to the nightspots with their pockets full. If they are not jumping around like jellybeans pouring bottles of water all over themselves, they are really drunk. That means that one cannot have a conversation with them. It does not matter anyway as the music is so bad. When we see them all, it is a collective. This is Broome. People come to Broome to have a good time. Are they having a good time drinking until they drop or taking drugs until they drop? I do not see how people can have a good time doing that. If they are addicted to alcohol, maybe we can do something to help them. If they are binge drinking, we can cut off their supply and help them. What do we do with the other ones and the gunky kids? Apparently, these kids smoke gunky from the minute they wake up in the morning, and they play video games all day. They are space cadets; they are off their faces. They are into these games. How can we help them? Should we stop the supply? I hope so. If we do not do something about what is happening in our community, we have a real problem.

I do not go out in Perth because I do not know where to go. When I go out in Broome, I know what to expect. I usually leave by 11.00 or else it gets really rowdy. Is that what everybody needs to do? Should everyone who is not an alcoholic or is not going to drink until they drop go home by 11.00? What does that mean for everybody else; that is, the police who have to manage it all? Whatever happened to people being responsible for their own behaviour? Do we need to legislate every time somebody stuffs up? Sometimes we have to stop legislating and make people responsible for what they do to themselves. It is as simple as that.

MR J.C. KOBELKE (Balcatta) [9.34 pm]: I would like to take this opportunity to respond to the Premier's Statement. There are many wonderful people in the electorate of Balcatta doing great things. I am concerned that there are impositions on them and a restriction in the services provided to them at a time when our state should be doing much better. We clearly are a great state with huge resources, both in terms of our people and our natural resources, and there are many great things happening around Western Australia. Even an average to poor government can still do lots of good things. One would hope that we would have a government that would be able to do even better than that: ensure that we take up the opportunities available, provide the very best services to our people that we can and ensure that the imposition that is put on them is as light as possible. Clearly, people have to pay taxes and there have to be royalties and other streams of revenue in order to provide those services.

It is my contention that the current government simply does not have its act together. The Premier and ministers have good ideas, some of them are quite energetic, but they have not been able to get their act together. They have not been able to put in place the financial discipline to ensure that this state moves forward, taking advantage of the opportunities. I am very pleased to speak about a couple of things that the Premier mentioned during the Premier's Statement today. Almost at the start of his statement he said that the government "would continue to hold a disciplined fiscal line". I am not quite sure what the Premier meant by that because the government has not been able to control expenses and we have seen a total lack of discipline on the part of this government. That is causing huge problems and there is a fairly high certainty that the budget will go into deficit this year. The Premier has his fingers crossed and is hoping for the best, but all the signs are that the government has totally lost control of the budget, which was very well managed by the previous government. To support what I have said I refer to the *Government Mid-year Financial Projections Statement*, which was released in December 2009. The second table, which is headed "Key budget aggregates", shows that the revenue the government has received has been slim pickings, although there has continued to be some growth. In 2008-09 the government had control of the budget for almost the whole year and had the opportunity to reorganise it. We are now almost halfway through the projections for the 2009-10 budget. We can see in the midyear projections that revenue was forecast to grow by about 8 per cent. However, government expenses have grown by 23.7 per cent. It is quite unbelievable that expenditure has grown by 23.7 per cent during the two years in which this government has had control of the Treasury. The estimate for expense growth for the current year was projected to be 6.6 per cent but by the time we got to the midyear review in December, it was 9 per cent for the current financial year. When that is compounded with the 13.5 per cent growth for the previous financial year, it is a projected 23.7 per cent growth in expenses over a two-year period. That is absolutely losing control of the state's finances.

We are aware that the Department of Health and other agencies are saying that they cannot live within the budget that has been given to them and that those increased expenditures are not in the midyear review. If we find that the expenditure growth for 2009-10 increases further from nine per cent to 10 per cent for the current financial year, we will have an expense growth over two years of almost 25 per cent. That is a 25 per cent increase on top of the current expenses for Western Australia's general government area. How could the Premier say in his statement today that the government would continue to hold a disciplined fiscal line? I cannot see where there is any discipline in the fiscal outcomes that are supposedly being administered by this government. Perhaps the Premier has a different view of what he means by "discipline" and believes that the word "discipline" can be

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

used in a number of different ways and that it has different meanings. The *Oxford English Dictionary* states that “disciplined” means “behaving in a controlled way”. Clearly this government has no control over the expenditure of the budget—no control at all. To have expenditure growth across two years approaching 25 per cent is to totally lose control of budget expenditure and shows that there is no discipline in this government.

When the 2007–08 actual net debt is the starting point for the two financial years 2008–09 and 2009–10, we find that net debt has increased from \$3.634 billion and is projected to be \$11.921 billion at the end of this financial year. That is an increase of 228 per cent in net debt over two years. During the government’s control of the Treasury benches, in just two years net debt will have increased by 3.3 times more than the net debt at the end of the 2007–08 financial year. Clearly this government has totally lost control of budgetary expenditure and of debt. That will, of course, be a growing problem for my constituents in Balcatta, because the government will need to increase the taxes and charges that are being levied upon them—many of them indirectly—to try to cover the huge hole that has been created in the state’s budget.

The increase in government borrowing will also lead to an increase in debt repayments. If this state loses its AAA credit rating, the interest charges on the debt will go up. That will compound the imposition on the residents and taxpayers of Western Australia through the increased taxes and charges that the government is administering. The Premier talked about how this government is taking a disciplined fiscal line. However, this government says one thing and does another. We can see from the actual results that this government has a total lack of discipline. It has no control. That is a major problem for this state. There are huge opportunities in this state. A lot of good things are happening in this state. Yet we have a government that has lost its way and cannot control the finances of this state. The people of this state will suffer from this mismanagement by the Barnett Liberal–National government

The other double whammy is that the Premier also talked about social responsibility. The Premier said at page 9 of his statement —

The success of the Liberal–National government will be measured not only by economic growth but by how well we translate that growth into support and quality services for the wider community.

I acknowledge that the government is putting some new money into some new services. However, in doing that, the government has had a lot of help from the commonwealth stimulus package, which has provided it with the money to do a range of things. The problem is that the government is cutting back on many of the services that have been provided in the past. Therefore, the citizens and consumers of this state are being caught with not only increased taxes and charges, but a reduced level of services. The government has been funding its huge growth in expenditure by taking money out of some buckets and putting it into others. The government has the right to do that. However, who are the beneficiaries of that changed policy? A clear example of that is the \$780 million that this government has taken out of the subsidy for residential electricity users. The loss of that subsidy is what is driving our electricity prices up. The former government had put into the forward estimates \$780 million to cushion electricity users against the increase in electricity charges. This government has removed that subsidy and has applied it to other purposes. That is why the working mums and dads and families in our state are facing increases in electricity charges of 25 per cent and 28 per cent. It is because this government wants to spend that \$780 million subsidy in other areas.

Mr C.J. Barnett: It was not a subsidy. It was a crass attempt to hide your incompetence.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: It was a subsidy. This is the spin we have from this Premier.

Mr C.J. Barnett: It was a disgraceful action.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: This is spin. That money was put in the budget as a subsidy to keep down electricity prices for families. This Premier is all about spin. As I have said, the Premier began his statement by talking about taking a disciplined fiscal line. But the facts are there. There is absolutely no discipline by this government. It is simply ripping money out of the pockets of working mums and dads and families so that it can put its agenda forward. The government has every right to put its agenda forward. But it cannot get away from the reality that it is forcing working mums and dads and families to pay huge increases in electricity charges so that it can meet its changed priorities.

Another impact of the government’s changed priorities is coming through now that the school year has started. The government has cut the operating budgets for individual schools. Therefore, not only do schools now have to find the three per cent efficiency dividend, but also they have to pay higher electricity prices for their lighting, their cooling and their heating. That is leading to a reduction in services in education, because schools are having to scrimp and scrape to cover their costs. We have yet to see what impact that will have on the quality of

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

education in our schools. That was a decision of this government. Again, it was a decision that the government had every right to make, but the mums and dads in Balcatta, who see the level of education and the comfort of their children in those schools being driven down because of cost cutting and the reduction in school budgets, need to know that it was a decision of the Barnett Liberal–National Party government. Its priority was to reduce the amount of money to schools so that the money could be applied to other areas. As we have seen, there has been nearly a 25 per cent increase in expenditure. There is plenty of money to throw around, but not for the kids in our schools, who are a much lower priority of this government, and not for mums and dads and families on low incomes who are now paying substantially higher electricity charges. That is not a priority of this Barnett Liberal–National Party government. The government has its priorities, but it is not considering the pay packets of ordinary families and the costs they have to meet in order to maintain their homes and look after their families.

The Premier went on to talk about that social responsibility in another way and said that his government is looking after people. At page 10 of the copy of the Premier’s Statement that was provided to members, it states —

Some of the practical initiatives already put in place by the Liberal National Government include:

- supporting seniors in the community through the cost of living rebate, ...

Of course, last year there were cost-of-living rebate payments to seniors. That was a good thing and clearly an initiative that this government can take credit for. But what has it done this year? It has ripped out of the budget by stealth the cost-of-living rebate. Table 1 in the *Government Mid-year Financial Projections Statement* from December last year, which table outlines the corrective measures, indicates that the government has made decisions to try to reduce the blow-out in expenditure in the budget. Even with these corrective measures, there is still nine per cent growth in the current year, or 23.7 per cent growth over two years. The government has cut out the seniors’ cost-of-living rebate, but it has not said that it has been cut out. Using very smart weasel words, table 1 states “Seniors Cost of Living Rebate — Timing Change”. It was a straight cut, but the government called it a “timing change”. Table 1 also shows a royalties for regions deferral of \$130 million in the current year, but that \$130 million will be redistributed in the 2010–11, 2011–12 and 2012–13 forward years. The royalties for regions money was a deferral. The table also indicates that \$8 million for the line item “Friends in Need Emergency Scheme Deferral” has been taken out of the current year, but it will be redistributed in the following year. An amount of \$26 million has been taken out of the 2009–10 budget for the “Seniors Cost of Living Rebate — Timing Change” item, to which I drew the attention of the house, but that money has not been put back in future years. It is a cut. The government has cut the seniors’ cost-of-living rebate for one year. I hope it will be there in future years, unless the government cuts it again, but it is not willing to say that it has cut it for one year. It is not willing to tell the truth. In table 1, the government has called it “Seniors Cost of Living Rebate — Timing Change”. An amount of \$26 million has been removed. It has not been slipped back for one or two years; it has been wiped out for one year. The seniors’ cost-of-living rebate has been cut out of this financial year; it has not been deferred.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Are you suggesting that seniors won’t receive a payment this year? If you are, you’re going to be wrong.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The Premier has taken it out of the budget. Is the Premier saying that seniors will receive a payment this financial year?

Mr C.J. Barnett: They will receive a payment midyear.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: In this financial year?

Mr C.J. Barnett: No; in this calendar year they will receive a payment, as they did last year.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: This is a tricky Premier! He is agreeing with me that the seniors’ cost-of-living rebate has been cut out of the 2009–10 budget. The government has taken \$26 million out of the budget, but it will be in the following year’s budget. The Premier has confirmed in his interjection that for the 2009–10 budget, the \$26 million for the seniors’ cost-of-living rebate has been cut—removed, eliminated, taken away. That is another broken promise. This Premier has broken so many promises that it is hard to keep count of them. The government has used weasel words by calling it a timing change when it is no such thing. The government is cutting it out in the current financial year. In the following year, if the government does not again cut things out, the seniors can expect that which was promised to them.

We can see in the reduction of money to our schools and in the increased waiting lists in our hospitals for elective surgery a diminution in the services available to the citizens of Western Australia.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: We can see that increased costs are being placed on families, on working men and women, but there is a reduction in the services that this government is providing in a range of areas.

I believe that a number of things underlie this total lack of fiscal control. There is clearly a lack of budget discipline, but I believe there is also actual dishonesty when it comes to laying out the accounts of this state. We have a Premier who does not believe in open and transparent accounting. We have a Premier who wants to be able to say that he is going to do something; and, if the money is not there, he will keep talking about it, but he is not going to make sure that we have a budget that reflects what the government is trying to do. The huge problem with this is that the government cannot instil discipline in the Department of Health, the Department of Education and Training, WA Police or other government agencies if it has no discipline at the top. If the Premier and the ministers are simply saying, "We're going to spend money. We're not going to put it in the budget, but we'll tell people that we are going to do these things", and if they are not honest in the way they present the books, how are they going to get middle and lower-ranking public servants who are under pressure to provide services to say that they will actually make the hard decisions, even though the Premier will not do it and the ministers will not do it? The government is going to rely on those lower-ranking public servants to make the hard decisions and to show the discipline that is totally absent from the leadership of this state. I have just given a couple of examples in which we can clearly see that. The Premier talks about the discipline in the government's finances, and there is no discipline; there is no control of expenditure. The government talks about a timing change when it is actually a cut.

Another clear example of this quite misleading language is when the government talks about a three per cent efficiency dividend across agencies. What that means is that the government simply removes the three per cent from an agency's budget and lets it run as normal, and at the end of the year the government has to put the money back in because the efficiency dividends are not found. Ministers did not go into their agencies and work with their directors general and chief executive officers and locate areas in which efficiencies could be found to get that three per cent cut. It was simply left to roll through the system. Of course, most agencies cannot meet the three per cent; that is, the large agencies that are providing the key services cannot meet that. Therefore, there is the classic fudging of the numbers. In this year's budget, the Minister for Police referred to the fact that \$8 million would be found each year from police operations under the legislation dealing with hoon cars. The minister comes into this place and bleats about it costing a lot more. In the budget, he said that the police would make \$8 million a year out of it. When we queried him, he did not have a clue what it was about. He guffawed and said, "We'll do it; we'll do it." We will wait and see whether he is going to find that \$8 million a year. What I put to the minister, who is now in the chamber, is that it was simply a dishonest budget fudge to make it look like the government was going to cover the three per cent. There was never any intention of getting an extra \$8 million a year of revenue relating to the hoon car legislation. It was not an honest set of books.

I go on to the Premier's commitment to Oakajee, to the Northbridge Link and to the Perth foreshore. He made promises and talked these things up, but there was no money in the budget. If those projects are to progress, the money will have to be found. It is no good the government saying that it will find it when the time comes. The whole point of good budget management, of disciplined budget management, is for the government to make sure that it reflects in the books the decisions it is making and the actions that it is going to proceed with. But that is not the way this government works. This government does not have that discipline. It does not have the ability to actually make decisions and prioritise what it wants. It clearly has the right to change what has been there before; it has the right, and, I would say, to some extent, the duty, given its election promises, to set its course as to what its priorities are and to shift funding to what it wants. But if it does that, if it is going to be honest, it has to say where it is going to make cuts, and then it has to be effective in achieving those cuts, not just write the figures into a false set of books so it can wave them around and make them look as though they add up. Anyone who knows anything about budgeting knows that if the figures cannot be delivered on, then the books will not balance and it simply will not add up. That is what we find in a situation where we already, on its midyear budget estimates, have a growth in expenditure of 23.7 per cent across the two financial years for which it has had responsibility. If we start to add the increased costs in health, in prisons, and other areas where expenditure is growing, then we will have this unbelievable situation whereby an incoming government will have increased, in just two years, its own recurrent expenditure by 25 per cent, or something close to it, and lost total control of the budget, creating the problems, as we have seen, of this huge growth in debt. From the figures I have already indicated, just in those two years we have seen an increase of the order of 3.3 times the net debt of this state.

The downside to that is that the various bits of infrastructure and services required to fuel the growth of this state and to smooth through the problems of the rapid growth will require money to be spent in the right areas, and fiscal discipline. If the government does not have that fiscal discipline, it will not get the outcomes. It will not get the training programs going; it will not get the health services at level that it wants them; and it will not be able

Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Lisa Baker; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr John Hyde; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Kobelke

to make sure that our education system is working as well as it needs to, to give our young people the opportunity to fully engage and to take up the real opportunities from the economic growth we have.

Fundamental to good government is good budget management. We can see, from the figures I have laid out, which are taken direct from the government's own papers, that this government is not disciplined and has lost control of the budget. If it cannot do something to get that budget under control, then the residents in Balcatta—my electors—will continue to suffer increased taxes and charges and a reduction in services. That is something that I am in this place to fight against, and to try to protect them from a government that is showing itself to not have the firepower to deal with these issues and to make sure that it actually runs this state in a responsible way.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr R.F. Johnson (Leader of the House)**.

House adjourned at 9.58 pm
