

LOAN BILL 2009

Second Reading

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Gosnells) [2.55 pm]: I will resume my speech by concluding my points on the estimates process. The estimates process was something of a let-down for a new member such as I. It is certainly something that I hope the Parliament will put its collective mind to addressing to find a means of better investigating the expenditures of the agencies through the budgetary process. In the future we hope to see some bettering of the process.

In this speech I particularly want to focus on a number of areas that highlight the problem of the \$8.3 billion loan and the fact that probably the \$8.3 billion loan is not the total amount. There may be many more millions of dollars that need to be attached to that, suggesting in fact that we have a state debt that is much bigger than has been presented in the Loan Bill. One area in which it is particularly evident that we have a problem is that of waste management. We have seen in the budget papers that the state budget depends on annual revenues of \$39 million from a waste levy—from a waste levy that has to be imposed on householders. That would have to be done through local governments. Indeed, it will require the amendment of the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act, because the objects of that act require that the money in the waste resource recovery account—the money that is acquired from an existing levy—is put uniquely towards the reduction of waste and also the recycling of waste.

The proposition that the government has put forward in this budget is that the \$39 million will go to prop up the budget of the Department of Environment and Conservation. Therefore, there is a reliance in this budget on amendments to an important piece of legislation. That is a big assumption, and one that I do not think can be made lightly. It is one that may well fall through when people are given the opportunity to consider what is at stake here. I say that because there is a lot at stake. We really are in a situation in which the management of waste in this state is approaching a crisis point. People have been saying that for a number of years, but it is not to be taken lightly. The issue of how we recycle waste, how we make sure that there are market incentives for the recycling of waste, how we deal with that waste in a cost-effective manner and how we can make money from waste are matters that the previous government put its mind to and did an extensive amount of work on. It might be the Yorkshireman in me that makes me say this, but the accent would be something like this: “Lad, where there’s muck there’s money.” I gather that Hansard will not be able to record that attempt at a Yorkshire accent. However, when we see the amount of waste that is generated by our society and consider that it is lost to the economy, something is going wrong. We prefer to plunder natural areas, natural resources and resources in general—virgin resources—rather than going for recycled product. There is a lack of a level playing field. We really need to establish a level playing field so that recycled product is able to compete with new product. That is the area in which we have to develop the right recycling processes. That is why the intent of our Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act is to make sure that we put money from a levy towards developing a system that will enable the proper recycling of waste materials.

In a very considered piece in *The West Australian* on 3 June, Robert Taylor outlined the problem as he saw it following on from the budget. He wrote —

The Government’s decision in the State Budget to ratchet up landfill levies an astonishing 400 per cent for industrial and household waste has caused plenty of angst in local government, where most of the anger from householders and businesses will be felt.

That is a very accurate summing-up of the situation. The problem we face is that the government is slugging people an extra amount for their waste but not actually doing anything to solve the problem of waste. Something has to be said about the process used to alert the chairman of the Waste Authority, the body which is set up under the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act to administer the levy and which has the job of turning around how we manage waste in this state. Mr Barry Carbon, the chairman of the Waste Authority, received a letter from the Minister for Environment, Hon Donna Faragher, on 15 May telling him to up the amount of the levy. He was told that the new levy rates would be \$28 a tonne for liable putrescible landfill sites and \$12 a cubic metre for liable inert landfill sites. He was just told to up the levy. There was no consultation with the expert body in the state, the Waste Authority, on how to tackle the problem. The chairman was just told to do it without any consultation at all. The letter from the Minister for Environment states —

The Budget Statements reflect an anticipated change in the expenditure rules for revenue from the landfill levy, —

Anticipated, but not guaranteed —

which would allow funds from the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Account ... to be applied to a broader range of environmental and conservation purposes.

That is code for making the Department of Environment and Conservation's budget dependent on waste. The production of more waste actually means a better budget for our Department of Environment and Conservation. What a terrible situation in which to put our environment and the funding of one of our most important agencies. That is an outrageous situation! This all comes at a time when we should be looking at smart ways to reduce our ecological footprint. There are a number of excellent ecological footprint calculators that I would counsel members to view, including the wwf.org.au footprint calculator. Using that calculator, members can see just how much footprint is generated through the production of waste and therefore realise that this is something that we really have to tackle. If everyone on the planet lived the sort of consumption lifestyle that Australians live, we would require between three and four planet earths to support that lifestyle. Obviously, that is a totally unsustainable situation.

I will conclude on the issue of this imposition, this directive, to the chairman of the Waste Authority. Mr Carbon was in fact obliged to make changes without a meeting. On Wednesday, 20 May 2009, the Waste Authority, without having met, had to issue a resolution to change the levy rates. It had to agree to advise the Governor of the new landfill levies. That is, I think, an abuse of process which is quite unacceptable and which, what is more, goes against so much of the good advice that we have on the management of waste. We need to bear in mind that Western Australia is one of the lowest recyclers in the nation and one of the very highest producers of waste. Of course we need to have in place a mechanism that can turn that around, which is the intent of the existing levy. In fact, when Cheryl Edwardes was Minister for the Environment in 1997, she said that the levy funds would not be used to fund the ongoing usual activities of the Department of Environmental Protection—as the Department of Environment and Conservation was then called—with the exception of the administration of the levy, which was to be funded by the levy. She recognised at the time of the Court Liberal government that this was critical to the success of waste management in Western Australia.

I conclude my discussion on waste by mentioning a report from the Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs. That committee was chaired by Hon Sheila Mills, its deputy chair was Hon Bruce Donaldson and it was made up of Liberal, Labor and Greens (WA) members. Its report states —

The Committee finds that although an increase in the landfill levy may be appropriate, it is concerned that any increase in the levy may be absorbed as an additional revenue stream for the Department of Environment and Conservation's activities in the area of waste management.

There has been this temptation but there has also been a recognition that this was a very dangerous road to go down. The recommendation states —

The Committee recommends that the Government implement a comprehensive review of levies, rates and charges associated with waste management, with the aim of getting a uniform, coordinated and cost reflective fee structure that can be reviewed by an independent body, such as the Economic Regulation Authority.

Nothing of the sort has happened yet. I will highlight the dire situation of waste in this state by referring to the South Metropolitan Regional Council's facility in Canning Vale. I know that this is an issue dear to the heart of the member for Jandakot and the member for Riverton. A fire went through the recycling area. Interestingly, the facility in Canning Vale has received a lot of public criticism. Perhaps some of that criticism is justified. I understand that it is solely to do with the smell generated by the composting aspect of that facility, in part caused by the green waste going into the composting area. I do not believe that the recycling of cans and paper is responsible for the smell. The problem of waste relates to the \$39 million hole in the budget.

I move on to the issue of container deposit legislation. At first I was pleased to see Hon Donna Faragher announce that she was welcoming further work on container deposits. When I read her media release of 22 May, I was quite disappointed because it was just an endorsement of another study, the first stage of which will involve a choice modelling survey to determine community attitudes on its preparedness to pay for a container deposit scheme. That is an absolute waste of time.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: The member for Mandurah is absolutely correct. We have had some very comprehensive, well-conducted surveys that have provided good data showing that 90 per cent of the Western Australian public absolutely endorse the idea of a 10c or 20c deposit on bottles and cans. This will be a test for the government. Will the government just buckle to the whims of the beverage industry? For some strange reason, the beverage industry likes to say that this is not a deposit; it is actually a tax. That is a ridiculous claim because obviously if people return their cans or bottles, they get their deposit back. The only people who would be penalised by this system are those who do the wrong thing—those who leave their beer bottle on the side of

the road for it to be smashed and run over by unsuspecting cyclists who then have to suffer the problems of a puncture. Problems also arise when cans are left by the side of roads in bushland areas where fauna are inclined to put their head in. I have seen terrible photos of lizards and snakes that have gone for the little bit of sugar remaining in a can of drink and have got their heads stuck and die. Action is needed to bring about the introduction of container deposit legislation. The benefits are enormous. There are employment opportunities. We can use it as an opportunity to generate the level of critical mass that makes a recycling industry viable in Western Australia.

I want to touch briefly on the issue of infill sewerage. This is something that, in my electorate, we are concerned about, particularly the absence of any ongoing funding for the infill sewerage program. It is a terrible situation. There are existing structures especially in Eileen Street and, I think, parallel to Corfield Street near Verna Street, where deep sewerage is ready, but it is not available to the majority of residents in Eileen Street. A bit of funding could provide enormous benefit by having that system installed.

Realising the shortness of time I will move on from infill sewerage to the disappointment with the funding for transport and the lack of imagination. It is all very well to want to reduce the amount of expenditure but we must use innovative mechanisms to counter the problem and provide the service. Can I have a brief extension of time please?

[Member's time extended.]

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr P.B. Watson). The sorts of innovation I am thinking of were mentioned by the member for Joondalup, who highlighted the benefits of giving some encouragement to car-pooling arrangements. At the moment, the vast majority of vehicles arrive at train station car parks with only one person in the car. In other words, we hear a great deal of outcry about a fantastic train system for which not enough car parks are provided. We could counter the lack of car parking bays by providing some sort of incentive such as priority parking at the train station to people who arrange with their neighbours to take two or three people in their car to the station. The benefits of that would be enormous. It would save at least \$51 million because that is the amount we will spend on creating 3 000 car parking bays and that will probably not be enough while individuals continue with this rampant desire to drive to the station alone in their individual cars. Rather than spending \$51 million we could encourage people to do something a little cleverer and a bit community oriented by working with their neighbours to drive to the train line efficiently and cooperatively. Instead, in answer to a question on notice when I raised this issue, the Minister for Transport straightaway dismissed it as an idea that was not acceptable because he says in answer to parliamentary question on notice 784 —

... Not all passengers will want to or be able to arrange to share their journey to the station.

Because of that idea the minister has—no doubt there is some substance to his argument, although he has not presented any—no suggestions have been made for how we could possibly instigate some sort of incentive system. It is very disappointing.

Another very disappointing matter that relates particularly to my electorate, and which concerns also my friend, the member for Southern River, is the traffic snarl that occurs around Bannister Road and Garden Street on Nicholson Road. Some terrible traffic build-ups occur there at peak-hour times, yet nothing is allocated in this budget to remedy that situation that impacts on many of my constituents and, indeed, the member for Southern River's constituents.

Mr P. Abetz interjected.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I have asked questions about funding to resolve the problem, and I have not heard anything yet. I have asked parliamentary questions and not received back any positive suggestions. I received a response yesterday that the City of Gosnells can deal with it.

Mr P. Abetz interjected.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: The information I have does not back up what the member is saying. Hopefully, the member for Southern River and I can work collaboratively to solve that transport problem. I fear, though, that we will have to wait until a Labor government is returned before we see some innovative solutions that lead to the sort of infrastructure that is required.

I turn now to energy and the problem of the gross feed-in tariff. It is a problem because a promise had been made by the Minister for Energy, Hon Peter Collier, that this Liberal government stood for a gross feed-in tariff. On Thursday 19 March there was a debate in the Legislative Council on the renewable energy technologies gross feed-in tariff motion in which Hon Peter Collier said —

I say at the outset that the government supports this motion.

Therefore, I find it astounding that in the budget we are told that it is not a gross feed-in tariff; it is a net feed-in tariff. This is about the money that people are paid when they put photovoltaic panels on their roofs. It is something that I am sure all members would agree is a very sensible thing to do and something that people should be given some incentive to do, just as in Germany. We know that people in Germany are paid a substantial gross feed-in tariff, which has acted as a huge stimulus in making that country one of the first manufacturers —

Mr W.R. Marmion: Number one.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Germany's gross feed-in tariff has made it the number one country for photovoltaic energy. I think the new member for Fremantle touched on this issue as well. It is an issue that really should be dealt with properly, but instead we have a government that is backing away from a commitment on a feed-in tariff for electricity produced by photovoltaic panels. Another statement on 14 May from the Minister for Energy, Hon Peter Collier, stated —

In meeting the Government's election commitments, \$13.5 million will be allocated over four years to introduce of a gross feed-in tariff for solar energy ...

Therefore, people who were perhaps of a Liberal Party inclination in their voting would have been getting messages all along that they had the right idea in supporting the Liberal Party and thinking that it would get them a gross feed-in tariff. But then the reality comes along—it is not a gross feed-in tariff; it is a net feed-in tariff and that is all we are getting. Indeed, there is even a serious question mark over the amount of money that will be made available to provide people with some sort of payment for that net feed-in tariff.

I will move on to a planning issue. I think there had been some hope that the new Minister for Planning would continue the very good work done by the previous Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. However, yesterday there was an announcement about Moore River near Guilderton. It is not very far from Perth and it is a wonderful, beautiful area where the Moore River winds through to the township of Guilderton. Quite often there is a sand spit across the river mouth. It is a wonderful estuary with absolutely outstanding natural values. A couple of landholders, I think the Plunkett Homes builder-developer is the principal one, want to build a huge subdivision there. The Minister for Planning announced yesterday that he would allow a development for 6 000 people in 2 000 dwellings to go in this almost pristine area, this wonderful asset, that we have so close to Perth. He wants to see this area turned into the northernmost edge of urban expansion and urban sprawl. To sprawl up to Moore River would mean pushing the edge of urban sprawl out by at least another 30 kilometres, which raises serious questions about the sorts of jobs that people would commute to from this Moore River development. It also raises serious questions, of course, about the environmental impact of the development, as well as questions about the sort of infrastructure needed and who will pay for that infrastructure. We know from previous proposals that the proponent was expecting the state to pay for some sort of bridge to be built. This is all overturning the wonderful work done by the previous government and the Western Australian Planning Commission. In April 2005 the Western Australian Planning Commission stated that a number of aspects of the proposed urban development south of Moore River were considered to be contrary to the state sustainability strategy's principles, one of which was the scale of urban expansion. The WA Planning Commission found that unacceptable. The proposed development was also considered to be contrary to social and economic sustainability principles. The commission had considered the issues of where people would work and how they would get to shopping places and so forth. It looks like the enlightened position of the WA Planning Commission in 2005, the position of the then Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, has been overturned with just one media release, one announcement and one bit of pandering to supporters of the Liberal Party. That is extremely disappointing, but I think it needs to be before the Western Australian public because it defines where the Liberal Party is today, which is in the pockets of big developers such as the Plunketts who want to push along developments in pristine areas such as Moore River. When Dr Geoff Gallop was Premier of Western Australia, he was very keen to make sure that this state would protect such areas. He wrote to the Shire of Gingin saying that there had to be 100 metre setbacks and a review of all sorts of scientific studies that had been put forward to ensure that this area was not developed in any haphazard or dangerous way for the environment or people, or in an economically untenable way.

It has already been mentioned in the debate that some \$166 million of the \$8.3 billion is being dedicated for a road. It needs to be said that based on information that has come out in the past few weeks, it is a road that goes to nowhere. The idea of building Roe Highway stage 8 is that it would somehow facilitate transport of trucks and freight into the port of Fremantle. We recently heard that the intention of the Premier, and I imagine of the government as a whole, is to eventually move the port of Fremantle to Cockburn Sound. Why on earth would they then want to spend \$166 million building a road that would go through the internationally recognised wetland area of Beeliar Regional Park and the Japan Australia Migratory Birds Agreement and China Australia Migratory Birds Agreement wetlands, which are recognised for their migratory bird species. Signatories to the

international agreements include Japan, China and South Korea. We expect other countries to honour their part of these international agreements. Why can Australia not honour its part?

Mr W.J. Johnston: Maybe the member for Jandakot can explain why we are going to build over there.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr J.M. Francis): The member knows better than to reflect on the member for Jandakot when he is sitting in the chair.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: We look forward to hearing the member for Jandakot. The Roe Highway stage 8 extension is not only environmentally disastrous, but also economically costly to this budget. It is also potentially the construction of a white elephant.

The Loan Bill with its \$8.3 billion represents a massive financial debt to the state of Western Australia, but it is more than that, because it also represents a massive debt that we are making for future generations through the depletion of our environmental heritage. It also has some very dangerous social aspects—I use the example of Moore River again—by placing people at the outer limits of metropolitan Perth in places where they will be isolated and eventually marginalised. On those counts, this budget and the \$8.3 billion represent a massive debt, which certainly fails any test that could be applied through the use of sustainability principles. We will be living with the consequences of it for many years to come.

MR M.P. WHITELEY (Bassendean) [3.24 pm]: I will use the next half-hour to outline my frustration and anger at the commonwealth government's handling of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Both the Howard and Rudd governments have expressed concern about misdiagnosis and over-prescription for ADHD. However, both delegated their concerns to the ADHD industry to address. Of course, it is the very industry that created the problem in the first place. We have had enormous success in Western Australia. Child drugging rates are down from an estimated 18 000 in 2000 to just over 6 000 in 2007. Two very good clinics are to open up in the next six to eight months. They will give a full assessment of children's behavioural and learning difficulties and reduce reliance on ADHD medication. All that good work is in peril in Western Australia, but probably more so in the rest of Australia where states are more likely to follow the federal government's lead. I am particularly angry with the Rudd government's Minister for Health and Ageing, Nicola Roxon, who was a lion in opposition on this issue and has been a mouse in government. Specifically, in opposition she called for the full disclosure of the pharmaceutical company ties of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians ADHD guidelines development group. She called for that loud and clear in opposition, but in government she has actually covered up those ties. In opposition she called for an independent inquiry along the lines of the 2004 Education and Health Standing Committee inquiry into ADHD, but in government she has gone back to the ADHD industry for advice. I will say a lot more about that later. I have tried to work cooperatively with her and her office through a number of forums. I will not outline them, but substantial efforts have been made to get her to work on a cooperative basis with me, and I have given up in frustration.

One of the issues I have made the most noise about publicly is the Howard government's decision to put a drug called Strattera—atomoxetine hydrochloride—on the pharmaceutical benefits scheme. This decision came into effect on 1 July 2007. This drug, Strattera, was subsidised by the PBS under the Howard government at a cost of \$101.2 million over four years. Strattera carries a black box warning for suicidal ideation—the highest possible warning that can be carried for a drug. I have talked about this drug at length in Parliament before. In fact, the last time I talked about Strattera was about a year ago, when I went through a series of adverse event reports collected by the Therapeutic Goods Administration. I am going to go through the new adverse event reports for Strattera that have occurred over the past 12 months. I will read out 13 incidents of suicidal ideation, mainly amongst children; in other words, kids wanting to kill themselves as a result of taking this drug to deal with what is considered troublesome behaviour. Before I do, I point out that research done by Con Berbatis, from Curtin University of Technology, showed that, because this is a voluntary reporting system, only a tiny fraction of the adverse events that actually occur get reported. He estimated that as little as two per cent of adverse event reports for drugs get reported by general practitioners. I am not suggesting that these accounts represent only two per cent for Strattera. It may be much higher for that drug because some of the adverse event reports are very serious. However members should understand that these 13 reports are only a fraction of the total figure. We do not know whether they represent four, 10 or 20 per cent of the total figure. If they represent 20 per cent of the total figure, that is 10 times the amount of reporting that the researcher encountered by general practitioners.

I will read through some of these reports. The first relates to an eight-year-old boy who experienced suicidal ideation, including drawings of himself hanging upside down from a tree in the ocean. A 28-year-old male experienced suicidal ideation. A nine-year-old girl experienced self-harming, although the account does not detail the nature of the self-harm. This next report is the second time I have read a report of this type in this Parliament. A 12-year-old girl taking the drug to address her behavioural problems was so distressed that she ripped out her fingernails and toenails. An 11-year-old boy suffered the emergence of suicidal ideation. I am

only reading these very briefly because I have got a lot to say. A 14-year-old boy experienced suicidal ideation. I will read the full report on another 13-year-old boy. It states —

By 2nd week on 40mg dose of Strattera parents noticed patient was more moody, irritable, but patient noticed concentration had improved at school, by 4th week—suicidal ideation (wanting to end it all, life is not worth living), no specific plans, physical and verbal aggression to family, school teachers and peers, roughly handling pets. Crying excessively, angry, withdrawn, socially isolatory, impulsive, moody, stopped being affectionate to family.

However, his concentration at school had improved! Other reports refer to an 11-year-old boy who became extremely agitated, terrified and talked about wanting to die; a nine-year-old boy who experienced suicidal thoughts, ongoing nausea and taste disturbance; a 10-year-old boy who developed psychotic symptoms and was being vague and talked about suicide; a seven-year-old boy who experienced suicidal ideation; and a 25-year-old woman who experienced suicidal ideation. The final report of a suicidal ideation is of a 48-year-old man. I have read out only the reports on suicidal ideation, but there are another 11 reports. Over the past year, there have been 24 reports. As I said, this is only the tip of the iceberg because this is a voluntary reporting system and only a tiny fraction of reports are made.

The call I made to Tony Abbott when he was the federal health minister was: do not make this bad decision; do not include this drug on the schedule of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. In fact, the Australian Childhood Foundation went a step further and asked the minister to ban this drug altogether. We do not need this drug to improve kids' concentration at school. I had no success. I had a sympathetic hearing from Nicola Roxon when she was the opposition spokesperson on health, but I have faced a stone wall since she became the Minister for Health and Ageing. Those reports speak for themselves.

I will return to the point that I made earlier. I stated that the immediate problem is that national guidelines for the treatment of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder published in 1997 were rescinded by the National Health and Medical Research Council on 31 December 2005. On behalf of the Howard government, the NHMRC outsourced the development of new treatment guidelines to the Royal Australasian College of Physicians. That sounds pretty straightforward and credible, until one does some research into the RACP. I would suggest that that organisation is not an independent guardian of professional standards. In the past fortnight a campaign by Dr Jon Jureidini has received publicity and has highlighted that Australian medical professionals could be compromised by commercial relationships. One does not have to dig too far to find those relationships. The RACP website details its most recent convention, Physicians Week 2009, which finished in May. The sponsors and exhibitors at that convention included Janssen-Cilag, Eli Lilly Australia and Novartis Pharmaceuticals Australia, all of which are ADHD drug manufacturers; and a host of other pharmaceutical companies. That was true for 2009, 2008 and 2007 and if I were to go further back, I suspect it would be true for previous years as well.

Those relationships were revealed by a casual effort to uncover RACP's commercial conflicts of interest. They were easy to find, and I found them in about five minutes. The RACP has commercial relationships with the pharmaceutical industries that produce ADHD drugs.

In May 2007 the RACP guidelines committee was chaired by Dr Daryl Efron. It was disclosed that Dr Efron's had connections with drug companies; he worked on the advisory boards of Novartis, the manufacturer of Ritalin, and Eli Lilly, the manufacturer of Strattera, the drugs that I just spoke about. Dr Efron argued that he had no conflict of interest. He made an interesting point, because implicit in that comment is the thought that he is independent of the drug companies. It is interesting when one reviews Dr Efron's public statements on ADHD drug treatment because he does not always agree with the drug companies. In fact, one of the pieces of advice that Dr Efron gave, which received publicity at the time, was contrary to the guidelines of Novartis, the drug manufacturer. Novartis states: do not use Ritalin in children under the age of six, whereas Dr Efron recommends it! Dr Efron has publicly advocated for the use of Ritalin in children under the age of six! It is true that he does not always take the advice of the drug companies; however, that is an example of the fact that he is prepared to go beyond what the drug companies recommend, and to recommend the use of psychotropic drugs on some very young children.

Dr Efron's drug company connections were disclosed in the *Daily Telegraph* in late April-early May 2007, which reported that Tony Abbott said —

... it was “not a good look” ...

That is, to have a chairperson with those drug company connections, and within a very short period Dr Efron resigned. The *Daily Telegraph* reported that Tony Abbott also said —

... he “instinctively questioned” the long-term use of drugs for non-life-threatening conditions.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 10 June 2009]

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Mr Chris Tallentire; Acting Speaker; Mr Martin Whitely; Ms Lisa Baker

This followed on from comments from the then Prime Minister, John Howard, who a week earlier on 27 April 2007 was reported in the *Daily Telegraph* as saying —

... he was worried about reports of over-prescription of Ritalin.

Howard went on to say that the government —

... was awaiting the outcome of a government-funded review of clinical guidelines for the diagnosis and appropriate treatment of ADHD by the Royal College of Physicians.

Those comments by Howard and the comments by Abbott that I am about to read out reveal the fatal flaw in the Howard government's approach, and I would argue also the Rudd government's approach. Abbott is further reported in the *Daily Telegraph* as follows —

“I want to see new clinical guidelines but I stress it is up to the experts to carefully weigh all the issues,” Mr Abbott said.

All of that sounds terribly reasonable. However, who are the experts? Unfortunately, the experts in the Royal Australasian College of Physicians guidelines group were, with some exceptions, ADHD industry insiders—people with commercial ties to the pharmaceutical industry. In fact, back in April 2007, when Dr Efron's pharmaceutical ties were disclosed, a number of people called for the disclosure of the drug company connections of all members of the RAPC guidelines committee, and leading the charge was Nicola Roxon as opposition health spokesperson. In fact in June 2007 she was reported in the *Daily Telegraph* as having said —

These guidelines are incredibly important and it is important there is public confidence in them ... Given the controversy surrounding ADHD, releasing the names is the sensible option to help restore public confidence in the process.

Nicola Roxon therefore said that the names should be put out there so that some research could be done to find out whether these people had a conflict of interest, all of which I applauded at the time. I thought: wonderful, here we go, a brand-new approach. However, she became the Minister for Health and Ageing about six months later in November 2007 and did not do a thing. She did not insist on their disclosure. In fact a year later there was some public disclosure of the level of the conflict of interest. There was an article that appeared in Adelaide's *The Advertiser* in November 2008, a year after Nicola Roxon failed to reveal the drug company connections. The article reads —

Seven of the ... 10 group members, including doctors, have declared receiving grants and air fares, hotels and overseas trips from companies making drugs to treat the disorder.

One non-medical member, former teacher Geraldine Moore, had the bill for her Sydney book launch picked up by Eli Lilly, manufacturer of one of the two major ADHD drugs, Stattera.

...

The newspaper has obtained the conflict of interest declarations made by nine of the 10 original working group members. The 10th has demanded details remain secret. Two of the nine since have quit. Among replacements is educational consultant Michelle Pearce, —

She is from Western Australia —

who helped write a booklet “Teenagers with ADHD” for drug company, Novartis.

So there we are, at least 70 per cent—I suspect that the tenth one wants it covered up—and therefore probably 80 per cent have drug company connections. I happen to know many of the drug company connections. They will be revealed in the fullness of time, but I do not have time to go through them today. At least 70 per cent, but in all probability 80 per cent of them, had ties to the drug companies. In November 2008, Independent South Australian Senator Nick Xenophon asked Senator Joe Ludwig, who represents Minister Roxon in the Senate, about the conflicts of interest. Senator Xenophon wanted to know details about the conflict of interest. The minister's response was —

The minister has been advised that the conflicts of interest declared by working party members are consistent with the normal range associated with clinician review committees of this nature.

If that is true, it is even more worrying. The federal government is saying that 70 per cent or 80 per cent is standard.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr M.P. WHITELY: We can expect that level of drug company conflict when guideline reviews are conducted for all sorts of other conditions. I do not have as great an interest in other conditions because this issue is enough

of an obsession to have without worrying about other conditions. It certainly is not a defence to say that it is standard government practice. In fact, it is a real concern.

Nicola Roxon, as opposition spokesperson in April and May 2007, called for full disclosure but failed to deliver it in 2007 when she became the minister. When the conflicts of interest were exposed in 2008, she again failed when she was asked in the Senate to detail them but did not do so. Another thing that Nicola Roxon called for when she was the opposition spokesperson was an independent inquiry. She said it was to be along the lines of the inquiry into ADHD in Western Australia three years ago. She said that she did not want children being medicated if they did not need it, and wanted to ensure that the children who needed support and assistance could get it; so we must get the balance right. That was a great call. The inquiry that she was referring to was an inquiry of the Education and Health Standing Committee, of which I was a co-opted member. It was made up of members from the Labor, Liberal and National Parties, and it included Mike Board and Paul Andrews, who brought an open mind to this matter and reached the same opinion as I had. It was a very good inquiry. Nicola Roxon held out that inquiry as a gold-standard inquiry. However, when she came to government, she completely ignored the Western Australian experience and relied on the guidelines of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, the membership of which is conflicted. I am of the same political colour as Nicola Roxon but I joined the Labor Party to look after the most vulnerable people. There is no-one more vulnerable than a child, including a 12-year-old girl who rips out her toenails and fingernails and a seven-year-old boy who wants to kill himself. I believed that the Labor Party would take this issue seriously. I implore the Rudd government and Nicola Roxon to pull out their finger and get on with the job.

I will talk for a minute about where the process is at. The draft guidelines that were made public, which I have had an opportunity to view, have gone back to the committee and the committee has worked on them. The RACP committee has handed it to the National Health and Medical Research Council. The full council is considering the final guidelines for public release. I am very hopeful that the NHMRC has enough brains to override the draft guidelines. All the indications so far, from my reading of the tea leaves, are that these things will slip through unnoticed. The consequences of following through this flawed process will be a disaster. The guidelines are incredibly drug-company friendly but hostile to children. If implemented, the recommendations will result in the use of amphetamines—Ritalin, which is an amphetamine-like drug, dexamphetamine and/or Strattera—as the first-line treatment for a condition, the diagnostic criteria for which includes avoiding homework, fidgeting in the seat, playing too loudly and seeming to not listen. It will encourage a biochemical intervention with amphetamines and other dangerous drugs to address those behavioural and educational problems. Specifically, the guidelines encourage the off-label prescription of a range of other drugs, including selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, which will potentially expose to litigation those clinicians who follow the guidelines and prescribe off-label medication.

The recommendations will also create an incentive for schools to act as commission-based ADHD spotters. I say that because one of the recommendations is that schools be provided with extra funding if children in their cohort are diagnosed with ADHD. That will create an incentive, as it has in the United States, for schools to have more kids diagnosed with ADHD. Another of the recommendations is that screening for ADHD be done inside the prison system. That recommendation may ultimately lead to a cheap source of amphetamines within the prison system that can be diverted to other prisoners. A host of other disastrous consequences are likely to come about if these draft guidelines are approved.

The defence that will be used against these criticisms is that the RACP committee took an approach that was evidence based. That is absolute rubbish. It is a complete nonsense to say that is what the RACP committee did. The majority of the controversial recommendations that were made by the RACP committee were based on the consensus of the guidelines group. These recommendations have been justified as being “best practice based on clinical experience and expert opinion”. In my opinion, just because these recommendations are based upon the clinical experience of those in the guidelines group does not make them expert opinions. Expert opinion is certainly no substitute for science. Consensus is not science. The consensus of people who have drug company financial connections is certainly not independent science.

This is not an evidence-based approach to medicine. In fact, some of the studies that the group relied upon are completely spurious. I have lost count of the number of studies quoted in the report—it is certainly more than 50—by an American doctor by the name of Joseph Biederman. In June 2008, Dr Biederman was exposed in *The New York Times* as having received \$1.6 million in consulting fees from drug companies between 2000 and 2007 without disclosing that to Harvard University, his employer.

A number of the other studies quoted in the report are by Dr Laurence Greenhill. I have personal experience of Dr Laurence Greenhill, because I was invited to attend the Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions conference that was held in Melbourne in September 2006, and he was one of the guest speakers at that conference. I was a bit surprised to get that invitation, but I was rapt to go along. Dr Greenhill had been invited to speak to the 300 international psychiatrists and other invited guests at that conference about

the debate about the box warning for ADHD drugs that had occurred in the United States in 2005 and 2006. What had happened at that time was that a specialist drug safety advisory panel of the United States Food and Drug Administration, comprising statisticians and cardiologists and all sorts of people with expertise in drug safety, had voted to put a box warning on all ADHD stimulants; that is, drugs such as dexamphetamine, Ritalin and Concerta. A box warning is the highest possible level of warning, and they recommended one such warning for psychiatric and cardiovascular events. Another panel—the paediatrics panel—had actually voted against that, and in the end the FDA decided not to put out that warning. Anyone who heard Dr Greenhill’s presentation to the audience would think that it was some sort of lunatic fringe that had wanted to put this box warning on those drugs. It was not. It was the drug safety advisory panel that had been commissioned by the FDA. The people on that panel are the most expert people in the United States when it comes to drug safety; yet Dr Greenhill had been paid, presumably by a drug company, to address this conference. He told those in attendance not to worry about what they read in some journals or the media because it was of no concern, as the people who raised the concerns were of no consequence. I knew that what he said was rubbish and stood up and, in my somewhat irritating style, posed a question to Dr Greenhill. I told him that I was interested in the drug company connections of the people on the paediatrics panel and asked him whether he might like to tell the conference about his drug company connections as well. Dr Greenhill did not say this at the beginning of his presentation, but he was connected with GlaxoSmithKline, an ADHD drug manufacturer; Eli Lilly; McNeil Pharmaceutical; Novartis Pharmaceuticals, another ADHD drug manufacturer; Solvay Pharmaceuticals; Bristol-Myers Squibb; and Alza Corporation. He forgot to mention that he was in the pocket of the pharmaceutical industry and the ADHD drug manufacturers. However, he was giving advice to 300 assembled international psychiatrists. If it had not been for an annoying and persistent politician from Western Australia, he would not have disclosed to those assembled his drug company connections.

As an aside, at that conference I was interested in a great big Eli Lilly stand, which was about 20 foot high, and male and female models were handing out free information about the drug Strattera—the very drug I mentioned earlier that resulted in the adverse events of children wanting to kill themselves and rip out their fingernails and toenails. Some very attractive young people were handing out this information and there was not one bit of information on that 20 foot stand or in the information presented to those in attendance about the dangers of Strattera. It was a conference attended by international psychiatrists who wanted to be educated on treatments for conditions such as ADHD.

If some of the recommendations of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians on ADHD are put into play, it will be a disaster. I mentioned briefly the recommendation about school funding. That recommendation is that federal, state and territory funding allocations to schools need to be revised to enable schools to access funding to students diagnosed with ADHD. That would be wonderful if we knew that the kids who are diagnosed with having difficulties concentrating at school were receiving special attention. However, in the United States, it means that every school that has in attendance a child who has been diagnosed with ADHD gets approximately an extra \$400 in untied funding. It is a historical figure and it might well be more than that now. In other words, they get extra money to spend on anything they want. An incentive has actually been created for the schools to have kids diagnosed: the schools get an extra \$400 in funding.

The other recommendation to which I referred was about prisons’ screening. I am about to run out of time, but I will conclude with this comment: we have been through it all in Western Australia. We had the leadership of people like Bob Kucera when he was the health minister, and Alan Carpenter when he was the Premier, which put Western Australia in a very good place. I acknowledge that the now Minister for Mental Health, the member for Eyre, has picked up the ball and is running with it. We have been through the ringer and had the experience. We have done well in this state. Why the hell would Canberra not look at WA’s experience and what it has done? For instance, Sydney has replaced Perth as the ADHD child drug capital of Australia. They are making all the mistakes we made, but they have the opportunity to learn from our experience. I encourage them to do that. I would encourage Canberra to pay attention to what is going on in Perth.

MS L.L. BAKER (Maylands) [3.54 pm]: I am mindful that I have only a few minutes before debate on the Loan Bill is adjourned. However, I would like to make a start on my response to the \$8.316 billion Loan Bill that we are being asked to consider. The position I would like to take in looking at this bill is, I suppose, through a much more people-focused lens, the lens of what is happening in our community, and what will happen in the coming years when Western Australians realise that, because of this level of debt that the state is entering into, the debt level for each individual will be \$8 000.

I want to start by talking about social exclusion and, first of all, some of the triggers that create social exclusion in a community. I beg for members’ forgiveness if this sounds like a list of things that are happening in Western Australia at the moment, but I think that is the point I am making. Firstly, there is housing affordability. When that is out of the reach of many people, there is a trigger for social exclusion. Massive debt—individual debt and state debt—is another one of the triggers in communities that create social exclusion. High unemployment rates

Extract from Hansard

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and job losses, family violence, mental health issues, and drug and alcohol abuse issues are all triggers that contribute to social exclusion in the community.

What is the impact of that on families and households in each of our electorates? Social exclusion breeds high levels of relationship breakdown and high levels of family and domestic violence, increases mental health problems and increases drug dependence and alcohol use. It is salutary to think about these things when we think about the level of debt that we are entering into with this Loan Bill. At the moment in our communities, social exclusion is probably the single most destructive factor that we all face. Certainly, I know that the people who come to see me in my electorate office come with problems such as housing affordability. That is probably one of the top things that they come to see me about. They may be on a very long public housing list, having to wait for two or three years to be considered for public housing. Worse still, they may be pensioners who have perhaps downsized their home and bought something smaller, or they may be renting something smaller. They find that they can no longer afford the rent that they must pay just to live in the house and maintain a lifestyle that is half decent.

From talking to seniors in my community, I know that many of them are spending a very high proportion of their pensions on housing. They often do not have enough money left for food, social activities and health care needs. For the first time in many years I played bingo with a seniors group in Maylands. It was a thriving community group. There must have been 50 or 60 seniors there playing bingo. I was a dismal failure in my attempt to clean out the pool. However, I sat down and talked to these pensioners about their lives and how things have been impacting on them. They are very, very concerned about their inability to meet the increasing costs of living. The cost of food in Perth has increased by 8.6 per cent in the past 12 months; housing by 8.1 per cent; health services by nearly 12 per cent; and education by 15 per cent. In Western Australia, there were 399 home repossessions in the January to March quarter, which is the highest number on record and more than double the decade-long average. The number of unemployed people in our state nearly doubled, going from 28 000 in October last year to 55 200 in April this year. If we were to measure it again and look at the seasonally adjusted figures for June, we would find, I am sure, that it is now much higher.

In sitting down and speaking to people in my community, I have found that the impact of social exclusion is already being felt very clearly. I can see that this will be exacerbated by what the government is proposing in this Loan Bill. The cost of living increases that are being imposed by this budget add up to hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars per family—increases that we have heard detailed in this place over the past two weeks with incredible precision. Our side has argued against those increases and the government has argued why they will not impact on families. Families will feel the hundreds and maybe thousands of dollars of increases in the form of increased water and energy costs; increased transport costs; extra rates that we find they will now have to pay due to increased waste treatment costs; hidden increases in the cost of food, which is driven up by the increased cost of producing that food; and ever-increasing rental costs and the lack of public housing. Although I acknowledge some really good work is being done to develop new social housing, that work will never be enough.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

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