

JOB DIVERSIFICATION

Motion

HON SALLY TALBOT (South West) [10.14 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house recognises the urgent need to diversify jobs in Western Australia's economy and condemns the Liberal–National government for failing to adequately prepare for diversification.

We have spent most of this week talking about the government's failings in its taxation legislation, its economic management and its complete lack of any fiscal strategy. This motion today, however, really comes to the heart of the matter, because it refers to the unfolding tragedy that is a direct consequence of the government's failure to manage our economic and fiscal future. That failure will be marked by not only the eventual turfing out of office on the second Saturday of March 2017 of this appalling, unfeeling and uncaring Liberal–National government —

Hon Nick Goiran: If that doesn't happen, will you resign?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I suggest that Hon Nick Goiran listen to me, because if he looked at the unemployment figures in his electorate—if he even knows where his electorate is—he might take a little more than a passing interest in the substance of this motion.

I am talking about the unfolding tragedy occurring in the households of ordinary working people around this state. I am talking about what happens to ordinary working people when they have a government that has no plan for jobs—no plan that will give people secure jobs, jobs that do not come and go as the resources cycle waxes and wanes, but jobs that bring reliable incomes, certainty for the future and the kind of quality of life that we in this richest of rich Australian states are entitled to expect for ordinary working people.

I muse sometimes in this place about what sort of story will be told about these eight long years of Liberal–National government. This is the story as I put it together. It started in September 2008, with the Premier riding back into town out of the sunset of retirement. He spent the first five years gallivanting around the state, crowing about the massive investment in the exploration and construction phase of the resources industry. Honourable members on the other side of the house should be able to quote these figures as readily as members on this side of the house, but at one stage we were talking about over \$120 billion of investment in this state—a massive amount of investment. There was the Premier, from Kununurra to Esperance, crowing about this massive investment and how good it was going to be for the state. At the same time, of course, he was spending up big on all his trophy projects, 99 per cent of which are in the metropolitan area, and most of which are within a spit of this very building. Talk about building empires! The Premier has contrived things so that he can look out of his office window and watch his empire growing.

Members should remember that I am telling my story about the eight long years of Liberal–National government. At the same time we had the great fortune—I have commented before —

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! Let us not get off on the wrong foot. Members know that debates during this session and the next have limited times for each speaker, and it is unfair for the member on their feet for members to continually interrupt and delve into that time; so each member shall speak, one in their own place.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I appreciate your comments, Mr President. I also appreciate that some of this is not pleasant listening for members on the other side.

Several members interjected.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I also point out that government members have lots of opportunities to make their contributions. I challenge them to get on their feet and defend themselves. Do not take the coward's way out and just sit there and make sniping comments. They should stand up and give us an account of what they think the government is doing.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Let us get back to the substance of the motion; otherwise, the whole debate will be finished before we get around to talking about the motion.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Thank you, Mr President. I was addressing my remarks through you; I know how receptive you are to these things. Of course, the reason your colleagues on the other side of the chamber will not get to their feet and defend their record is they know that it is indefensible. That is at the heart of their problem.

As I was saying, part of that story about these long eight years of Liberal–National government is that it had the incredible fortune of presiding over government, having the reins of power in its hands, at a time of

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unprecedented economic well-being. I draw here not on my own observations but on the observations made by the Grattan Institute in 2014, as follows —

... it was noted that in 2013/14 Western Australia received the highest revenue per capita of any of the Australian States, collecting an extraordinary \$2,000 extra per capita than both Victoria and New South Wales. Yet both NSW and Victoria have maintained their AAA credit rating. Western Australia has consistently enjoyed above average revenue on a per capita basis and ... collected more revenue per capita than any other state in the Commonwealth.

We have had some good economic times during these eight years. Yet during the six years of the Liberal-National government, the Premier, his ministers and his backbenchers have consistently done the same thing. Maybe things will change—how sweet that would be. Nobody on this side of the house would complain if the government changed its tune, unblocked its ears and started listening. For six and a half years, the government has consistently turned its back on the pleas of workers to diversify our economy and to pump back some of that wealth, some of that massive windfall, into local jobs and local manufacturing and into providing apprenticeships and traineeships and the kind of stable, secure workforce that we ought to expect in a state such as ours in the twenty-first century.

I talked about \$120 billion plus of investment that the Premier has been charging around the state crowing about for years. Of course, the tragedy is that this is where the worm has turned. This is where the story goes from a story about wealth and affluence and relative wellbeing and optimism to despair, because what has happened now is that because of the government's failure to manage the economic and fiscal strategy of this state, that is exactly what we are faced with—despair, confusion and uncertainty. What elements have gone into creating that despair, confusion and uncertainty? First of all, of that \$120-odd billion of investment, \$100 billion is now finished; it has gone. The construction jobs have gone and the exploration jobs have gone. We have lost about \$100 billion of what was pumped into this state. We are left with a few smaller, often uncertain, projects because the big four that sustained that \$100 billion worth of investment have now moved beyond the construction phase. They are no longer pumping jobs and money back into the state's economy. At the same time, we have had the fall in the iron ore price, as dramatic as anything we have ever seen. Yet, as I pointed out in my speech on taxation earlier this week, surely it is not unexpected to anybody who understands that we cannot play the speculator with the state's economy. It was certainly catered for during Labor's eight years of government, but this mob shows that it is incapable—or unwilling, perhaps, to be more charitable—of reading those economic tea leaves properly. The iron ore price has collapsed. At the same time, we have had massive cuts to the public sector, fuelled by draconian pieces of legislation that this government has rammed through using its numbers, with no substantive argument to back up the philosophy, fairness and equity behind those claims to modernise the public sector. We have seen massive cuts to TAFE, and I will have more to say about that later. We have recently seen redundancies at the rate of up to 1 000 jobs a week and, of course, we are seeing an increase in unemployment, hovering around six per cent. It is nothing like the very large unemployment figures that we saw in the latter years of the last century; nevertheless, in Australian terms, the unemployment rate is extremely concerning.

That is my story about the six and a half years of the Barnett government so far. I doubt that anything will change. I am prepared to be courageous and say that that is how that story will be written about the government's eight years. Government members do not have to listen to me. Let us go to some other commentators. A subeditor with West Australian Regional Newspapers wrote an article on 29 April, just a few days ago, headed "Twilight of a Golden Age", stating —

Over the last decade, WA has been through a golden age.

...

But unlike other golden ages, beyond a few roads and a white elephant or two in the metropolitan area we have squandered these boom years.

With a plummeting iron ore price, the State is faced with a stark reality. Workers are being made redundant at sickening rates.

Our economy is being dragged down as the industry faces a downturn.

The State Budget resembles a bad 1980s horror movie ...

Shane Wright wrote an article that appeared in *The West Australian* of 30 April headed "Spending Plunge", stating —

WA is going from economic rooster to feather duster as mining investment collapses, a fresh review of major capital projects has revealed.

Compiled by Deloitte Access Economics, the review shows the total amount of investment spending either in train or planned across the country has fallen \$116 billion over the past two years.

Much of that has occurred over the past 12 months ... WA accounts for \$243.6 billion of that spending but it is rapidly falling.

Access partner Stephen Smith said WA was at particular risk because as projects get finished there were no new major projects coming online.

“Engineering construction in WA is moving from rooster to feather duster,” he said. “The massive change in the fundamentals—in particular, commodity prices and mining profits—mean that this sector and its activity levels are falling rapidly as they march over the cliff edge.”

There we have Shane Wright, mixing metaphors slightly. We are going from an economic rooster to a feather duster, but we are also the lemmings being driven over the cliff because this government has basically lost the plot.

Hon Sue Ellery: Feathered lemmings.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: “Feathered lemmings”, as Hon Sue Ellery says.

The fact is that the Premier has lost the plot. He knows what it means to live in a state with a resource-based economy. For heaven’s sake, the man teaches economics! He can talk the talk about a resource-based economy, but he has absolutely lost the plot on the whole boom and bust narrative. At the same time as he was crowing about his \$120 billion worth of investment in exploration and construction, he talked about the fact that we were not having a boom. Now that we are having a bust, he does not want to talk about a bust either. He has a real problem with those “B” words. He has lost the plot when it comes to any sort of coherent narrative on boom and bust. He has lost the plot when it comes to the cost of living spiralling out of control. The impost on ordinary households is now massively out of control. The Premier has lost the plot when it comes to employment. He has lost the plot when it comes to the GST. He has no coherent arguments about fairness and equity in the distribution of the GST. He is simply using it as a smokescreen to cover up his own deficiencies and the deficiencies of every single one of his ministers and every single one of his backbenchers in the Liberal and National Parties.

My goodness, what did we see the other day? If we ever wanted proof that the whole GST argument is just being used as a smokescreen and the government is devoid of substance in its arguments, I could not believe my eyes when I saw that the old secession move had been raised yet again. Talk about the two-year-old! I think Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson, who obviously has more recent experience of two-year-old tantrums than I have —

Hon Sue Ellery: And something to look forward to.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Yes, and something to look forward to. She gave us a graphic description the other day, which I thought perfectly described the Premier’s behaviour: if you do not come and play with me, I am taking my bat and ball and I am going home.

I will just add one more bit of commentary to give weight to my own observations about the catastrophe that this government has created for the state. The economist Saul Eslake said the other day that in his view the government is rather like a pensioner who wins the lotto and then complains about the loss of pensioner concessions. I think that is a very telling way of putting it.

The fact is that the Premier has lost the plot on all those key economic drivers. The Premier has no more idea about how to diversify our economy in order to slow down and reduce the rate of unemployment, to prevent people being made redundant, to provide decent levels of training, to provide real, meaningful apprenticeships for our young people and to train the workforce that we need for the twenty-first century than he has about how to fly to the moon. He has tried to walk away from the responsibility of losing our AAA credit rating and now having us put on the watchlist for unsound debt repayments. He has tried to walk away from that and make light of it. Even now he is trying to make light of it. He made light of it at the time we lost our AAA credit rating, saying, “Oh, it’s probably because we tried to do too much too soon.” He is still trying to walk away from it. He got up the other day at the In the Zone forum and the article on it reads —

Mr Barnett said there had been four major economic slowdowns during his political career and expressing optimism about the next few years. He described Western Australia as a fortunate place and India as its next big opportunity.

...

The current downturn would not last, he said. “In my political career I’ve been through four so-called never-ending crises and here we are again,” he said

“Western Australia will bounce back just as quickly as it does every other time.”

I tell members what: Mr Barnett might bounce back because he has a nice, cosy retirement planned in Toodyay, but how are the 1 000 people who were made redundant the other day going to bounce back? What is the government going to do about helping those people bounce back? Do not tell me that members opposite are going to start waltzing around the place talking about India; India is further away from the 1 000 people who lost their jobs the other day than the moon. The government has no plan. It has nothing to talk to people about. It has no idea of how to manage its fiscal strategy so that it can ensure the economic future of this state.

The government cannot walk away from the misery of unemployment. The government cannot walk away from these figures I have drawn from a document I commend to everybody in this place, which is the “Small Area Labour Markets — December quarter 2014”. In Perth right now, 74 200 people are unemployed. Outside of Perth—in the rest of WA—15 600 people are unemployed. That is a total of 89 800 people unemployed in this state. What a lucky state we are. We are heading towards 100 000 people unemployed. Members on that side of house might think that that is a shame and that people will probably have to cancel their holidays. Let us look at the 1 000 people who lost their jobs the other day. They might have to cancel their holidays and might have to put off buying a new car, but there is always India! That is the way the people on the government benches view this matter. But I tell members that is not what unemployment means to people. That is not what the 1 000 people went home and talked to their families about on the day they were made redundant. What they talked about was that for the foreseeable future, they would not be able to pay the enrolment fees for their sport clubs, their kids would not be able to have new school uniforms, and they would not be able to have those special treats that we give to kids—birthday presents, birthday parties and all those little things that constitute quality of life in a state such as Western Australia that has experienced unprecedented growth in income over the last five years. That unprecedented growth has now been squandered and frittered away on a few trophy projects and a few misconceived programs by this government, the only real interest of which was to keep its members’ bottoms on the treasury bench. There was no other interest above and beyond that.

Hon Simon O’Brien interjected.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Do not worry, Hon Simon O’Brien; Hon Simon O’Brien has a nice, cosy retirement coming up too, so do not worry. He should just sit there and be quiet like he has done for the last couple of years.

Several members interjected.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: But the government cannot walk away from the misery of unemployment and it cannot walk away from the misery of job insecurity. Forty per cent of jobs in Western Australia are now classified as insecure jobs. The government cannot walk away from the misery of lost opportunities for young people as it strips the guts out of TAFE and ensures that young people will not be able to join a modern, twenty-first century Western Australian workforce.

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Leader of the House) [10.36 am]: Can I say at the outset that the government will not be supporting this motion whatsoever. I say to Hon Sally Talbot that sometimes I really wish she would stick to the facts, as opposed to just the personal vitriol that comes out the whole time; the bitter and twisted vitriol is just extraordinary. It is almost like Hon Sally Talbot must have this absolute personal disdain for the Premier, which is just —

Several members interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: With all due respect, Hon Adele Farina, I sat here and listened to—what?—20 minutes of speech and I reckon 15 minutes of it was directed at personal abuse of my colleagues or the Premier. That is what it was, not the actual facts.

Several members interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: So I will deal with some facts.

We are dealing here with the diversification of this great state of ours, and natural resources in Western Australia form the basis of our great state. Successive governments have nurtured and developed the natural resources of this great state of ours. I would like to go through a couple of those key areas and show what has been done and continues to be done, built on what has come before us in terms of successive governments but expanded beyond that. I want to deal with the facts as opposed to the personal vitriol.

Let us have a look at how Western Australia is moving to a smarter economy through scientific research and innovation. Science is central to Western Australia’s future development, and the state is ideally placed to expand its capacity and expertise in areas that build on our natural and competitive advantages, which is what I said earlier. This Western Australian government has identified five priority areas for the application of science to diversify and strengthen the economy, which is exactly what the motion is in terms of diversification. Those

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five areas are, logically: mining and energy; agriculture and food; biodiversity; health and medical research; and radio astronomy. I would like to go through a few of those various areas to identify ways in which the state government has diversified and provided job opportunities across this great state of ours.

In terms of mining and energy, Perth is a centre for scientific and technological innovation driven by the needs of the resource sector. It is home to the technology divisions of major international mining, energy and associated services companies, and numerous research and development initiatives including BHP Billiton, Rio Tinto, and Roy Hill's Remote Operations Centres, Chevron's Perth Global Technology Centre, Shell, Curtin University and the Challenger Institute's partnership in the Global Centre for FLNG Learning and Research, and the GE Oil and Gas Skills Development Centre. The research sector is marked by active collaboration between government bodies, industry and universities. It cannot be done in isolation; it is a collaborative effort between government, the non-government sector and, of course, higher education. Higher education in itself is something we are developing and I am personally taking care of, in terms of developing innovation in that area. I will talk about that in a moment.

Hon Adele Farina: But no-one can afford it if you keep putting up the TAFE fees.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Oh, dear.

With training we are actually putting the funding where it belongs, and that is in the priority areas of employment. There has been a significant increase in the uptake of training in the priority areas of employment. So, we are not spending it too thinly across the whole state and dealing with training facilities or training pathways that do not provide avenues for employment. That has been the case with training not just in Western Australia, but across the nation, for several decades.

The research sector is marked by collaboration. The Australian Resources Research Centre, which is a major initiative of this state, CSIRO and Curtin University and which was developed in collaboration with the petroleum and mining industries, was established to enhance petroleum and mining exploration and extraction research and development. Also, the National Resource Scientists Precinct, a collaboration between CSIRO, Curtin University and the University of Western Australia, is a network to which organisations can readily connect with world-leading expertise and gain access to infrastructure to tackle the complex challenges facing the resources industry. In addition, the Western Australian Energy Research Alliance is comprised of the CSIRO, Curtin University, the University of Western Australia, with industry partners Woodside, Chevron and Shell. WAERA delivers direct access to a critical mass of leading researchers to meet current industry challenges and lay the foundation for future energy developments. Western Australia is at the forefront of global mining innovation such as exploration and mining software and remote control automation. According to a September 2013 Austrade report, industry research indicates that 60 per cent of the world's mining software was developed in Australia and the EMS segment is concentrated in Western Australia, which has 45 per cent of Australia's EMS companies. The world's first fully autonomous heavy-haul long-distance rail system, Rio Tinto's AutoHaul rail system, had its first proper trial in the Pilbara in late 2014. This follows the use of driverless trucks in Western Australia by the three major miners, Rio Tinto, FMG and BHP.

Hon Sally Talbot interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I am actually dealing with the facts; I am actually dealing with diversification.

Hon Sally Talbot: Driverless trains, great job initiative!

Hon PETER COLLIER: It is diversification.

Hon Sally Talbot interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: What is the cynical response to this one? What is the problem?

Hon Sue Ellery: Driverless trains—driver-less.

Hon PETER COLLIER: We have been talking about innovation. Are we talking about a different motion to the one I read? It says —

... diversify jobs in Western Australia's economy and condemns the Liberal–National government for failing to adequately prepare for diversification.

Hon Sally Talbot: Keep digging.

Hon PETER COLLIER: How could we possibly be digging?

Several members interjected.

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The PRESIDENT: Order! Let us get back to the motion.

Hon PETER COLLIER: This is called science innovation and, believe it or not, it is a part of innovation. It provides for diversification and what happens then? We become a smarter nation, a smarter economy and that provides for more jobs.

Hon Michael Mischin interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is right; international competitiveness is absolutely vital.

Moving to agriculture and food, agriculture is cemented as an area in which Western Australia truly excels. Agriculture and food industries such as cropping, livestock production, horticulture, fisheries and aquaculture represent the state's second biggest export industry. We are also one of the most pest and disease-free agricultural production areas in the world, giving us an advantage in our export-based agricultural and food sector. We are now looking at opportunities to further grow and develop the sector to provide for the growing global demand for premium, safe food, particularly from Asia. The application of science to agriculture is a key component in realising more agricultural opportunities. The Western Australian government is investing in research and development projects to respond to the challenges of a changing environment and to remain internationally competitive by improving the productivity and long-term profitability of the state's agriculture and food industry. Priorities include boosting grain productivity, for example, the breeding of new high-performing wheat varieties that have good disease resistance and excellent yields, and a new open data exchange system to provide growers with timely weather and crop information for them to make informed management decisions about their cropping program.

I move to diversification in the marine and terrestrial biodiversity and conservation area. Western Australia is home to some of the most unique biodiversity on earth. We are home to three of Australia's five marine bioregions, two of Australia's four marine-based World Heritage areas and eight of 15 Australian global biodiversity hotspots. Our rich biodiversity can be attributed to the state's size spanning a range of geographical, soil and climatic conditions. Science research will improve management decisions to protect terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and reduce costs and delays in development approval and monitoring. Western Australia is increasing its scientific collaboration with its Asian neighbours to promote biodiversity conservation. In 2014, a memorandum of understanding was signed between Western Australia and China to establish our first sister park relationship and strengthen collaboration in plant conservation research to promote biodiversity protection.

Point of Order

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I wonder what document the minister is quoting from. Could he identify the document? I would love to know whether it is called "A Plan for WA Jobs".

The PRESIDENT: You can ask the minister to identify the document and you can request that he table it, but of course it is his decision to do that.

Hon PETER COLLIER: First of all, these are my notes that I have been provided with and I have no problems tabling them whatsoever, because I will not be able to get through everything we have done in the short time frame.

Hon Michael Mischin: Incorporate them into *Hansard*!

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is right!

I do not have a problem whatsoever because I have cut out a fair bit, so if I can table them, everyone can see the enormity of what we have done as a state government. I have no problems tabling, Mr President; I will do so at the end of my contribution.

Debate Resumed

Hon PETER COLLIER: The University of Western Australia and the University of Mumbai in India are collaborating in marine and ocean science to share the UWA Oceans Institute's research strengths in oceanography, ecology, engineering and resource management. Perth now has one of the top capabilities for marine science in the Indian Ocean due substantially to the research capability retained and developed through the state's investment in the Western Australian Marine Science Institution. The proposed Kimberley national park was one of the Liberal government's key election commitments in 2013 and along with the creation of the Great Kimberley Marine Park, is a central component of this government's Kimberley science and conservation strategy.

I move on now to radio astronomy, another area of diversification. Radio astronomy is a priority for Western Australia and the state has a thriving radio astronomy community with strong science and engineering capabilities. Starting from almost nothing, in less than a decade we now have a world-class research astronomy

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capability through the establishment of the International Centre for Radio Astronomy Research. ICRAR has more than 120 staff and students and has built a world-class centre of excellence in astronomical science, engineering and information and communication technologies, working on highly specialised science and engineering projects underpinning the Square Kilometre Array. The SKA will be the world's largest and most sensitive radio telescope and will be used by international scientists to make groundbreaking observations and discoveries about the universe. Over the next decade, Western Australia will continue to grow as a hub for radio astronomy and spin-off industries in supercomputing and data science, providing tangible opportunities for businesses to grow and revolutionary technologies to emerge. One of these opportunities revolves around the challenges of big data. The SKA is poised to change the way we think about data, how we collect it, store it, process it and analyse it. The amount of data that is expected to be collected every day is around 10 times the current global internet traffic. New technologies, skills and workforce capabilities will be needed to make sense of and create meaning from these massive datasets.

I know Hon Sally Talbot will ask what on earth that is doing for jobs, but can I say that it is making us internationally competitive in the science field, the innovation field and the technology field. If we do not have those centres of excellence and innovation, there is not the opportunity for international competitiveness. That is the fact of the matter; it simply does not work any other way. If we are behind the rest of the nation and we are behind the rest of the world in terms of innovation, we cannot be internationally competitive and that of course restricts opportunities for jobs and employment.

We are also building infrastructure to accommodate our diversifying economy. There are some major projects throughout Western Australia that are a direct result of those scientific and technological innovations that I have just mentioned: for example, the Ord–East Kimberley expansion, Pilbara Cities, SuperTowns and the Water for Food initiative. These projects are largely funded through the royalties for regions program. They aim to enhance the economic diversification and quality of life in the remote regional areas of Western Australia. That is true; they provide opportunities in the Pilbara and the Kimberley, the midwest, the goldfields, the south west, the great southern and the metropolitan area. We are dealing with opportunities for employment; this is what it is all about. We could go along, as we did in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, hovering along in mediocrity and assuming that all employment and innovation would come from the sheep's back. We cannot go along that way; we cannot just accept mediocrity. We must diversify other areas of the economy. That is exactly why everything that I have just mentioned for the last 10 or 15 minutes provides opportunities for diversification, and ultimately, of course, for employment.

Then there is the metropolitan area where major projects are transforming our great city: the Riverside project, Perth Children's Hospital, the new Perth Stadium, Perth City Link, Fiona Stanley Hospital, Gateway WA, Elizabeth Quay, the Forrestfield–Airport Link and the new hospital in Midland. These are all providing thousands upon thousands of jobs and providing new innovation in each of these areas to ensure that we, as a state, can keep up with the rest of the nation and the rest of the world. If we do not—if we hover along in mediocrity—we will not provide innovation and opportunities —

Hon Sally Talbot: You are clearly the feather duster; you are illuminating my point.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Did the member have a lemon for breakfast or something?

Hon Sally Talbot: No, I had a lovely bowl of porridge, thank you. It was delicious.

Several members interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Why does she always feel the necessity to get personal? She spent her whole 20 minutes bemoaning the Premier, moaning and carrying on about everyone on this side. The member has such a chip on her shoulder. Get over it; you are in opposition. Work towards finding an alternative as opposed to just slagging off the government all the time. It is—I cannot say frustrating—relentless and boring.

Several members interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Opposition should be providing an option. I did not hear one word in the member's contribution about what she would be doing as an alternative.

Hon Sally Talbot: There is a lot more to come.

Several members interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: The member does not have any more time! Sorry, she has had her chance.

As I said, all those projects throughout the state that I have just mentioned—innovation in science, technology, agriculture and health—provide a stimulus for the economy for job diversification. We cannot rely on what we have done in decades past; that is, rely on the same job opportunities for people in this state of ours, because it

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just does not work. In addition, higher education is an area of massive growth. It is one of the biggest innovative areas that we can possibly enhance, both nationally and internationally. We have five wonderful universities. The University of Western Australia has been in the top 100 universities for the last two years. The significance of that, again, is that it is developing innovation. It did not just become a top-100 university because of the number of students it has; it is because of innovation. What universities do in science innovation, medical innovation and educational innovation provides opportunities to diversify. All our other universities—Notre Dame, Murdoch, Edith Cowan and Curtin—are expanding at a rapid rate. They are providing more opportunities for our students to become qualified in areas that have not even been thought of before. They will move into the economy and provide employment opportunities in the positions they are in. Higher education is a magnificent area of growth. I am doing an enormous amount of work with our universities at the moment to ensure that we remove any of the shackles that have prevented innovation in the past. We are seeing those universities go from strength to strength.

Just to conclude, there has been an enormous amount of innovation under this government in all areas of the economy, which is, by default, providing enormous opportunities for employment. That is exactly what this motion is about. That leaves me to say that we will certainly not be supporting the motion.

I seek leave to table the document containing my notes.

Leave granted. [See paper 2858.]

HON ALANNA CLOHESY (East Metropolitan) [10.54 am]: I am very pleased to support this motion, particularly because the unemployment level has grown in the East Metropolitan Region; it was around 4.5 per cent at the end of last year and it has grown from 2.8 per cent in 2008. Looking at that, I was thinking how on earth that could be the case. Yes, there has been a significant increase in population across the region over that time, but we have also had unprecedented economic growth, so how can it be that people in the East Metropolitan Region are experiencing that level of unemployment? That will also increase into 2015 as thousands of job losses are occurring, and still more are on the horizon. We hear about those job losses every day. The fact is that the Western Australian economy is in trouble and the East Metropolitan Region is experiencing a big hit from that trouble. As we heard from Hon Sally Talbot, the Barnett–Redman government does not have a plan to deal with rising unemployment and future jobs growth. In fact, part of the problem is that there was no plan from its election in 2008 through to now when anybody could have told it about an economic downturn on the horizon.

Several members interjected.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Many people could have seen it coming, including the Premier but, of course, the Premier was fiddling while the economy started to slow down. What confuses me is that particularly in the last 10 years, our economy has seen unprecedented growth—our economy has grown exponentially over the last 10 years, yet employment continues to rise in the East Metropolitan Region. What is particularly interesting about that is that there has been such significant growth at the same time as the global financial crisis. As we know, the global financial crisis devastated other western economies. It had a slight impact in Australia, but particularly because of the work of the federal government at the time that sought to shore up jobs and thought to create thousands of jobs —

Several members interjected.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: It provided thousands of jobs through its economic stimulus package. People would otherwise have been hurting a lot more than that cushioned impact of the global financial crisis on the Australian economy without an economic stimulus package.

Hon Jim Chown interjected.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: That was a thought-through plan that brought jobs to Western Australia, gave some security to Western Australians and created for Western Australian schools, for example, some much-needed accommodation. The Building the Education Revolution program in Western Australia was a great hit. I do not know if members witnessed —

Hon Jim Chown interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! When I put the question the last time, I saw several members stand, but I did not see Hon Jim Chown. He cannot make his speech from his seat, taking up other members' time.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: There were significant undercover assembly areas, new classrooms and improved playgrounds—a lot of things that those classrooms and schools needed, and it provided jobs. That was the plan.

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As I said, the Australian economy has had unprecedented growth and a couple of things have fuelled that growth. As we know, the urbanisation and growth of China has led to unprecedented modern construction in that country, which, of course, called upon the use of Australian minerals, including iron ore; we know that. That demand for iron ore has now turned around. It turned around in part because of a slowing Chinese economy, and we could have seen that coming. We could have seen that construction in China was going to slow down. In fact, the Chinese were also saying that the demand would slow down over time. That growth fuelled our economy: it fuelled jobs in other sectors, it fuelled jobs in housing, it fuelled jobs in hospitality, and it fuelled jobs right across the economy.

That boom has now ended. Over that time, government revenue increased—this is astounding—from \$19.3 billion in 2007–08 to \$28.6 billion in 2013–14. The economy was booming and government revenue was increasing, so why do we have the current budget crisis? We have seen nearly a 50 per cent increase in government revenue. This government mismanaged the budget. It focused on its pet inner-city projects at the expense of a strong jobs plan. It did not have a plan to continue economic growth and it did not have a plan to continue jobs growth. The government saw it coming and it let it happen, and now we have a crisis. The people losing their jobs and coming off the large mining construction sites day after day, often with no notice and just arriving to find that their job is no longer there, expect the government to have a jobs plan. What they have gotten is absolutely nothing. In fact, what they really have is a \$30.8 billion budget black hole that they will have to pay for by finding jobs. They will also need money to support their schools because of what has been cut out of the education budget. If they want to go back and retrain at TAFE, they will find it very difficult because the courses are no longer there because TAFE fees have increased and TAFE funding has been cut. What choices do they have left? They have very few choices. They are faced with a government that has no plan. There is no support for them to retrain or find new work because there is no jobs plan.

At the same time, the government is bleating about how much it is getting back from the GST. This government does not have a jobs plan. It has whittled away the budget on its pet projects, and it is now blaming Canberra because of the GST situation. We are getting back only 30c in the dollar, but of course we know what happened there! The government could have seen that coming if it had looked at the Commonwealth Grants Commission formula over two years ago and done something about it. Premier Barnett when he was Treasurer Barnett signed off on that GST formula. He could have stood up and said, “We need a floor under this. We can see that there will not always be good times in the Western Australian economy. We need a floor of, say, 50c in the dollar to make sure that our state gets a fair share when those good times end.” Treasurer Barnett could have said that in the same way that Labor said that, but he did not. He chose not to. He chose to sign up to the GST when he was Treasurer, and the concerns of Labor went unheeded. What do we see now? We see the GST at 30c in the dollar and the Premier going, cap in hand—embarrassingly so—to Canberra to try to claw back some money to fill in the big black hole of \$30.8 billion that our children and our children’s children will have to deal with in the future.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! The order I have for speaking is Hon Paul Brown and Hon Simon O’Brien. It gets a bit messy when ministers stand afterwards and it makes it a bit difficult. Hon Paul Brown has the call.

HON PAUL BROWN (Agricultural) [11.04 am]: I rise today to make a contribution to the motion moved by Hon Sally Talbot. May I say from the start that this house recognises the urgent need to diversify jobs in Western Australia. That is exactly what we have been doing. Both the Liberal and National Parties of this government have continued to invest in the regions. We have introduced and implemented a range of programs throughout regional WA, and if the pod on the other side cares to listen for a little while, I will run through some of the benefits that we have been able to implement. The regional blueprints have put \$292 million into identifying opportunities in the regions. Every region in WA has access to the \$292 million, and let us not forget that that is \$272 million more than Labor put into regional development in the last year that it was in government. Over five years that \$292 million investment will develop major economic and community development projects throughout the regional investment blueprints. Developed by each of the nine regional development commissions, the blueprints are plans for investment outlining transformative strategies, priority actions and investment opportunities. They are plans for growth and plans for jobs. Through the consideration of local issues and conditions, the regional investment blueprints will develop strategies to grow the regions’ economic base through the development of its competitive advantages, workforce and community. Some of the things that the blueprints endeavour to achieve include: priority actions to ensure a strong and vibrant future for the regions; economic, social and environmental capacity building projects; and delivering real jobs and future sustainability for the region. The Wheatbelt Development Commission for one has over 10 small businesses in operation in its area. The blueprint looks at opportunities for big business to move into the region to help with that capacity building. Pilbara Cities has looked at job creation in construction and once the infrastructure is developed. We have seen an unprecedented investment into the Pilbara in Karratha and other places. House rental prices have dropped considerably from the highs of \$2 000 and \$3 000 down to \$1 000. That is a direct consequence of the Pilbara Cities initiative driving investment into those regions and sustaining jobs and

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housing, which allows the workers in those regions not to fly in, fly out but to stay and invest in the region in Karratha and Port Hedland. It is very different from the “sky is falling” situation that Hon Darren West talked about with Pelago West.

Hon Sue Ellery interjected.

Hon PAUL BROWN: Why should Karratha and Port Hedland not have the same sort of diversity and cultural opportunities that the member has in the cappuccino strips in her region? Why should regional WA not be allowed to have the same?

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members!

Hon PAUL BROWN: The blueprints have been rolled out and I will just run through a very quick list of what that means to regional WA. The Goldfields Esperance Development Commission has received an \$845 000 investment, the Pilbara Development Commission has received \$640 000 to develop its blueprint, the Peel Development Commission has received \$365 000, the Mid West Development Commission has received \$365 000, the Great Southern Development Commission has received \$495 000, the Kimberley Development Commission has received \$770 000, the South West Development Commission has received \$285 000, the Gascoyne Development Commission has received \$655 000, and the Wheatbelt Development Commission has received \$735 000. That money will help those commissions to develop the strategies and economic drivers that will continue to grow jobs and sustainability in those regions. One of the great initiatives to come out of those blueprints is the Growing Our South initiative, which takes in the Peel, South West, Great Southern and Wheatbelt Development Commission areas. It is a \$600 million royalties for regions-funded program to implement major infrastructure community projects in those regions. The Growing Our South initiative ensures that WA’s nine regions will have similar access to social and economic development funding through royalties for regions that aligns with other programs such as Pilbara Cities, the Mid West Investment Plan, the Gascoyne Revitalisation Plan, the Goldfields Esperance Revitalisation Plan, and the West Kimberley Revitalisation Plan. Any members opposite who say that the government is pork-barrelling should remember that the opposition has a representative in that seat—Josie Farrer holds that seat. The opposition says it is pork-barrelling, but we are actually investing in the Kimberley, Albany and places like that. That argument cannot stand up.

Let us talk about the things that the opposition has not done.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! It is funny how, when some particular members get up, others seem to light up in response. We understand that, but do not go overboard.

Hon PAUL BROWN: Let us talk about some of the things that the opposition is not doing. The opposition is not even considering regional Western Australia. In its four-page submission on the redistribution of electoral boundaries it asked for a seat to be cut from regional WA. The opposition has run up the white flag when it comes to regional Western Australia.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Settle down; just bring the temperature back down. I do not think you have to shout; you can be heard very clearly. You have a very strong voice.

Hon PAUL BROWN: Sometimes to be heard over Hon Ken Travers, one has to shout even louder, so I apologise.

Let me just reiterate: Labor has run up the white flag. It has asked the Electoral Commission to abolish a seat in regional Western Australia, abolishing a job in the other place. The opposition has run up the white flag when it talks about jobs. Its moratorium on genetically modified crops will actually affect jobs in the regions. The opposition is helping to destroy jobs in regional Western Australia.

Hon Martin Aldridge: They do not understand regional Western Australia.

Hon PAUL BROWN: That is exactly right, Hon Martin Aldridge; the opposition does not understand regional Western Australia and regional development. That is why it invested only \$20 million in regional development in its last year in government.

One of the other great initiatives that this government has been able to implement is our Seizing the Opportunity in Agriculture vision, which the government has adopted in full and rolled out. Its vision is investing in jobs outside the mining industry, taking up the opportunity of the dining boom, as we call it, rather than the mining boom. We have been very cognisant of the need to develop and diversify our economy through the Seizing the Opportunity investment. We have invested \$20 million into research and development grants for grower groups, which means

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jobs; \$6 million for research into market opportunities in Asia and targeted assistance to access those markets; \$20 million to boost grain research and development through the Australian Export Grains Innovation Centre; and \$5 million to establish an organic food industry research centre in Bunbury. We are actually embracing all sectors—the genetically modified, the conventional and the organic parts of agriculture. Funny that, is it not? We have allocated \$20 million to boost business skills in agriculture and food businesses. That is more jobs. There is \$10 million to support the development of the Muresk Institute—on top of the \$10 million that we have already invested—to fill those jobs that everyone says are out there, but we do not have enough graduates to fill. That is exactly what Muresk has done, and that is exactly what we are doing through investing in Muresk. We are investing in education in the regions, including the Geraldton University Centre. I was at the graduation ceremony the other day, and I am very happy to sponsor some of the scholarships there. We are seeing our own regional people staying in the regions, getting educated in the regions and staying there with jobs, due to the investment that this government has made. Then we go on to the \$40 million Water for Food initiative that Hon Mia Davies, Minister for Water, has recently announced in the West Kimberley and in the Moora–Gingin area. I have a lot more information here. We can talk about regional mobile communications—the \$45 million stage 1, rolling out 113 000 kilometres of telecommunications to an area one and a half times the size of Tasmania; the \$40 million that the government is spending on the regional telecommunications project, the second stage of the mobile telecommunications program. That is all for businesses and jobs. We are investing in jobs like no other government before and like the opposition has never done.

The PRESIDENT: Before I call the next speaker, about 10 minutes ago you might have heard a telephone ringing quite loudly, breaching a protocol. The offending member actually fessed up and handed the phone in, even before I could confiscate it, and that phone will be returned to him at two o'clock.

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition) [11.16 am]: Thank you, Mr President. I am pleased to be able to speak on this motion. If your message to us did nothing else, perhaps it will remind everyone to please check that their phones are on silent.

This is a motion about missed opportunities and about the fact that Western Australia did not take advantage of the good times to plan for those times, which are happening now, when thousands of jobs are being lost and there is a heightened sense of insecurity, and all the flow-on effects of that. We find ourselves now in an extraordinary situation. The end of the investment phase of the mining and resources industry that we are going through now was not unpredictable or a shock to people. It was entirely predictable; it is a natural consequence of the cycle of work in the mining and resources industry. During that phase we saw an extraordinary surge in Western Australia's royalty revenue. Since 2001–02, royalties received by the Western Australian government have gone from \$644 million, or six per cent of total general government revenue, to \$6 billion in 2013–14, which is 21.5 per cent of general government revenue. The Barnett government has presided over an extraordinary increase in general government revenue, from an annual figure of \$19.3 billion in 2007–08 to \$28.6 billion in 2013–14. That is nearly a 50 per cent increase in general government revenue in just over six years. We are about to see the Barnett government preside over a \$1.3 billion deficit for the first time in 15 years, despite the fact that revenue in 2014–15 is still expected to be some \$27 billion. That is a three per cent drop from the revenue received in 2013–14. However, that three per cent drop is having devastating consequences.

This has been of some concern for some time, including for august bodies such as the Economic Regulation Authority, which, in the final report of its 2014 inquiry into microeconomic reform in Western Australia, found that strong institutional and governance arrangements are in place to facilitate important state public infrastructure through the prioritisation of competing proposals, sound project planning, cost-effective implementation and strategic asset management. That is the ERA saying that the state government has many levers it can pull on infrastructure and the jobs that flow out of it. The ERA went on to note that these arrangements and processes are not always followed. The consequences of failing to follow those processes that focus on the greatest benefit to our economy mean that the government uses its limited resources for sub-optimal outcomes. We must focus on growth, because that will deliver us jobs and create opportunities.

In response to that report, Mark McGowan has announced that a McGowan-led Labor government will introduce a state infrastructure strategy. That policy was announced earlier this year, and it was welcomed by the crazy radicals at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia, because it is something that that organisation has been calling on the present government to do for the past seven years, but has not done. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry was very pleased to see this policy, and we were very pleased that it endorsed part of our plans for ensuring infrastructure jobs into the future in Western Australia. The notion that the state is doing all it can is not in fact the case, and the government knows that the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia has been calling on it for some time to give certainty in investment in infrastructure, and to plan properly so that appropriate investments can be made. If the government chooses not to do that, it creates enormous uncertainty. Announcements and then unannouncements about things like

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Metro Area Express light rail, for example, cause great uncertainty in the investment market. When people think that the government is going to invest in something and that jobs will flow as a consequence, but the government then changes its mind or it pushes the implementation date way beyond that which was originally promised, it jeopardises the jobs that come with investment; for example, in areas around those north-eastern suburbs of Perth that would have benefited from the flow of jobs from the MAX light rail.

Part of this motion is about the need to diversify. I was pleased to hear the plans that Hon Paul Brown read out to us. I was pleased to hear the plans that the minister in his contribution laid out for us as well, but it is too little, too late. If the government had properly planned and properly invested when we had the good times, WA would be in a position now where there would have been a buffer around the downturn in the resources industry that was entirely predictable.

The Grattan Institute also commented that most of the jobs in Perth were within a small radius around the CBD, that the commute to those jobs was getting longer and that the government could do things to encourage investments around vibrant communities; Mark McGowan has spoken about those as well. When the government invests in infrastructure like rail, for example, that has a significant flow-on effect that does not happen when our major transport investment is in roads. Rail is more permanent, and vibrant community hubs can be built up around that infrastructure with residential and retail development, and jobs close to where people work. That is a much more sustainable investment in jobs planning as well as the actual transport infrastructure, than the government can get out of roads. Planners and people who are able to project into the future, who are much more expert than I am, have been advising governments for many years that rail is much more sustainable for transport outcomes by reducing congestion and also creating jobs where people live. That is why Mark McGowan has been talking about his plans for vibrant community hubs around transport modes, such as major rail centres, as part of what a McGowan-led Labor government would do.

I feel terribly constrained and frustrated in these debates, because I am used to speaking for much longer than 10 minutes, and I have a lot that I could talk about.

I want to talk about India, because I am pleased to see that the Premier has said it is time to pay attention to India, but it is too little, too late. I was really privileged to visit India last year. The investment that President Modi is making in upskilling his workforce in India is enormous; the scale is enormous. Where is Western Australia in all of that? There are huge opportunities around training and assisting the Indian population to upgrade their skills. If members talk to education and training stakeholders about the investment that Victorian governments of both persuasions have made into their trade offices in India and the role that those trade offices play in promoting Victorians to provide training and education skills to India, and compare that with what Western Australia invests and the role of Western Australia's trade offices—I have to comment on the fabulous role played by Peter Forby in India and thank him for his assistance to us on our trip—they would see that we are so far behind the eight ball in how we take advantage of what the need for upskilling could provide to Western Australia, it is too little, too late for the Premier now to start talking about how fabulous the opportunities are for Western Australia in India. A lot more can be said about that.

This government has squandered its opportunities; it has not saved money to properly invest; it is not committed to a state infrastructure strategy; and it is not committed to transport modes and vibrant community hubs that can keep jobs where people are living. The government has dropped the ball and as a result the whole community is feeling less confident and more nervous about their job security than they need to feel. The government has not been paying attention in the way that it should to make sure that we have jobs for the future and not just for the short term. The government missed the opportunity; it has wasted and squandered the opportunity given to it.

HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan) [11.26 am]: On receiving notice of the motion before us today, members would have anticipated, potentially, a constructive debate about how we can grow Western Australia and make things better for Western Australians. With the exception of a few brief glimpses in parts of the last speaker's comment—as usual the Leader of the Opposition did introduce some constructive elements to debate—all we have had from the opposition this morning, including most notably the mover of the motion, was a quite objectionable class hatred-fuelled diatribe from the quite shallow monoculture that currently occupies the opposition benches. I want in a moment to respond to one or two things that the mover said, but I do not appreciate being put in the position that, of all people, I have to stand up and say some nice things about Premier Barnett. However, I am going to say some things because we need a bit of balance. Members can anticipate that in a minute.

Hon Darren West: So you're on our side.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I have been on both sides of this house in a range of different spaces over the years and I have seen this sort of motion before. It is the sort of motion that can tease out a whole range of pros and

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cons about the issue at hand—if people want to concentrate on the issue. We have heard some positive examples from the Leader of the House and Hon Paul Brown about the things the government has done, which address the terms of the motion. To the contrary, we have not heard much from the opposition in support of its motion. In fairness, I will concede, in an even-handed way, that some of the things that Hon Sue Ellery was alluding to have some justification. In an economy as complex and in times as dynamic as that we currently inhabit, any government will be doing things that someone will say they would prefer were done a bit differently or that there was a bit more emphasis on this aspect of the economy rather than another. However, I can tell members that the Barnett government has been conspicuous in doing everything it can to promote the Western Australian economy. An example that has been alluded to referred to opportunities for developing the cities of Hedland and Karratha, which is something that has been derided—members can pick on anything they want to in public life and do that! I will refer particularly to Hedland here, because a lot of what occurred there was in response to the businesses and the communities that came to the government and said they could not get anybody to work in their fish and chip shop, newsagent or shoe store because how the heck were those junior employees meant to find somewhere to live in a town where basic accommodation costs more than \$1 000 a week. That is what the government set about doing. It is about diversifying jobs. It is not about importing rocket scientists; it is getting people to do the sorts of jobs that are essential to make a community. They are the sorts of things that happen. We could look at all sorts of other examples, in the same way as any opposition can show examples of where the government might have done something else. I do not want to get too tied up in that argument, because I do not think that this debate is worth it.

I did find something disturbing, though, and I hope I do not help opposition members too much here by getting them to look at themselves and how they conduct themselves. I do not think it is very helpful for any opposition's prospects to simply attack political opponents in such a personal and poisonous way as we have seen this morning. The reference again and again to the Premier "swanning" all over the state is an attempt to demean the office of the Premier, but what it does is demean the member who utters terms such as those, as though they have nothing else to offer. I have observed Hon Colin Barnett over many years. I could give members a critique of him. Who knows? Maybe one day I will.

Hon Sally Talbot: Give us a taste!

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I have limited time, so let me deal with the matter at hand. I have witnessed in Colin Barnett a Premier who is very dedicated to working damned hard for this state, day in and day out, and for very long hours. It has been a conspicuous effort. It is not he who swans around the state. He moves purposefully through all sectors and endeavours to do his job as leader of the government as best as he can, and it should not be dismissed as swanning around the state; and it is not because he is all right, he has looked after himself or he has got a nice comfortable seat to sit on in Toodyay. What do opposition members have against the poor old people of Toodyay—it is a nice place. Opposition members continue to say such things as, "He's all right; he has looked after himself." Hon Colin Barnett could easily have retired to Toodyay—indeed, he wanted to in 2008 before we mucked up his retirement. To suggest that he is just looking after himself demeans the opposition. Members have feet of clay when they make those sorts of accusations. Just look at the speakers we have heard this morning. Do they feel hard done by? Have they been able to use their positions to get nice comfortable seats somewhere in West Perth perhaps? I do not see too many former state presidents or state directors of the Liberal Party occupying these benches. However, the Liberal Party has eminent and respectable people like Hon Norman Moore who come from these benches taking up those positions. Why is that? It is because they want to put something back into the state, and not because they are trying to feather their own nests. Before members of the opposition start to cast about those accusations on the basis of their crocodile tears shed for the way the government has been behaving while they have been in opposition, they ought to look at themselves to try to understand a bit better what drives genuine people in pursuit of public service in this state. It is not all about self. Members opposite tell us more about themselves than anything they have told the house about those whom they are seeking to attack this morning. I do not think it serves opposition members well at all.

Hon Alanna Clohesy: Where's the plan?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I am fast running out of time, unfortunately, because of the time-limited nature of this debate, but I would like to thank Hon Alanna Clohesy for reminding us who the Treasurer was during the second Court government. At least she told the house something.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.