

Mr John Kobelke; Mr Rob Johnson; Acting Speaker; Dr Graham Jacobs; Mr Peter Watson; Mr John McGrath;  
Speaker; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Gary Snook; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Grant  
Woodhams; Mr Mick Murray

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**APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNT) BILL (NO. 1) 2007**  
**APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNT) BILL (NO. 2) 2007**

*Standing Orders Suspension - Motion*

On motion without notice by **Mr J.C. Kobelke (Leader of the House)**, resolved with an absolute majority -

That so much of standing orders be suspended as is necessary to allow government business order of the day 1 to be now taken.

*Second Reading - Cognate Debate*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

**MR R.F. JOHNSON (Hillarys)** [5.54 pm]: I have only five minutes left. I am very concerned that nobody is listening to what I am saying. Members are having conversations around this chamber. Mr Acting Speaker, I ask you to bring them to order so that I can get across some very important points.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr G. Woodhams)**: If members want to have conversations about business that is not relevant to the member for Hillarys' speech, I advise them to have those conversations outside the house so that the member can continue.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON**: I did not know that I was going to be given this opportunity to have at least another five minutes to make my contribution to the debate on the budget bills that are before the house at the moment. I thought that we would deal with private members' business until 6.00 pm, and I was not going to be able to take up the balance of my time at seven o'clock because I have a meeting at seven o'clock that I need to attend. Therefore, it is encouraging that I have five minutes. However, it will be very difficult to say all the things that I want to say in five minutes.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt**: Or in an hour.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON**: The member for Victoria Park is quite right. It would be difficult to say all the things I want to say in an hour, because there are so many things to say. There are many criticisms that I, and, I believe, many members on this side of the house have of this government and of this budget. I must say that I have not found one person representing a body or an entity who supports the budget, nor have I seen it recorded anywhere. Even the Western Australian Council of Social Service gave the budget five out of 10 - five out of 10 - from people whom the Labor Party is normally supposed to support and help. I can understand the government's criticisms of people such as John Langoulant from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia, people from the Housing Industry Association and people from the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia, and other businesspeople. I can understand that the government accepts that they will criticise it. When those people have done so, they have spoken the truth. They have said what many Western Australians have said. I will put this question to those members who remain in the house: can they name me one person who represents an organisation and who has said that this budget is a great budget?

**Mr M. McGowan**: The Chamber of Minerals and Energy.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON**: No, it has not; absolute rubbish. There is not one -

**Mr P.B. Watson**: The City of Albany.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON**: There may be certain little pocket areas. If the member says the City of Albany, that must be because some money is being spent in Albany as it is a marginal Labor seat. However, I can tell members that there is nowhere in Hillarys -

**Mr P.B. Watson**: No first home buyers? Haven't you got any first home buyers in Hillarys?

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON**: I have a few of them, yes. I said a person who represents a body of people. I do not mean individuals; I mean organisations. Members opposite know it is the truth. I know for a fact that some government members are not really happy with the budget, but they have to go through the charade. The Treasurer gave the shortest budget speech I have ever heard since I have been a member of this house. I do not blame him. He did not have a great deal to say, did he? He certainly did not have any good news to pass on to the people of Western Australia. Members opposite go through a charade - they are like a load of monkeys - when they applaud the Treasurer when the Premier shakes his hand. It is absolute rubbish and absolute hypocrisy, because they do not really mean it.

I am glad to see that the Attorney General is in the house now. I mentioned in my earlier comments what a wonderful job the Attorney General was going to do to bring down the number of those outstanding fines and

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infringement notices. However, under my friend the Attorney General's watch, they have gone up to a maximum of \$165 million. Mr Acting Speaker, I had better seek an extension just to get me through till six o'clock, and then I will be finished.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I will not go past six o'clock, much as I would love to. I want the Attorney General to tell me what has gone wrong. Is the problem that the Attorney General is overworked? Is he overloaded with other stuff? The health system and hospitals are in crisis. There are waiting lists to get on the waiting list. People are waiting for trials to take place. It is disgraceful. It could take two years to have a trial in this state under the Attorney General's watch. The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions does not have enough prosecutors. The government is in crisis in so many areas, yet it has so much money. It has been so lucky. It is not through good management; it is through sheer luck with the business world in Western Australia, the corporations, and the minerals - and thank God for the Chinese, because if it were not for them, the government would be in dire straits. I will tell members what worries me silly. When Labor is out of government - it will be out of government eventually, and hopefully that will be after the next election; if it is not, it will be the one after, because, as a matter of fact, people get tired -

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members, it is 6.00 pm. The house will resume at 7.00 pm.

*Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm*

**DR G.G. JACOBS (Roe)** [7.00 pm]: Mr Acting Speaker (Dr S.C. Thomas), I thank you for your cooperation.

**Mr P.B. Watson:** Excuse me!

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** There appears to be almost some favouritism in the lineball decision! Mr Acting Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to talk a little about my shadow portfolios in the disability sector, about seniors and a little later about a few topics concerning my electorate.

One in five Western Australians has a disability and 280 000 Western Australians with a disability are aged under 65 years. An important statistic, particularly from a budgetary consideration, is that 71 600 Western Australians with a disability under the age of 65 years are profoundly or severely disabled, which means they have a profound or severe core activity limitation and need a significant amount of care. Fourteen per cent of Western Australians with a disability are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; 43 per cent of Western Australians with a disability report that their needs are only partly met or not met at all; 87 per cent of people with a disability require assistance and receive this assistance informally through their family and friends; and one in 10 Western Australians is a carer. To give some insight into the difficulties, 33 per cent of carers have a disability themselves. These people all come under the auspices of the Disability Services Commission, which has a budget of around \$300 million a year and a 10 per cent growth in funding in this year's budget. Half of the services for the disabled are provided by the Disability Services Commission itself and the other half is contracted out to other organisations known as external services or non-government organisations, of which there are 148 in Western Australia. The Disability Services Commission's budget of \$300 million is essentially split up into accommodation support, intensive family support, individual coordination and strategic coordination. I would like to concentrate my remarks on accommodation support and intensive family support in particular. The growth funding in the budget is a case of steady as she goes. I put it to the house that although growth funding is steady, it will not solve some of the critical problems in the disability area in Western Australia. There is a crisis in accommodation support in Western Australia -

**Mr M.P. Whitely:** Have you had a look at the level of federal funding?

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** We will get to the old chestnut of the Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement. Every time we talk about disability services and their apportionment, members opposite start talking about the commonwealth government. Let me deal with the commonwealth, state and territories -

**Mr M.P. Whitely** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Order, member for Bassendean!

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** I will deal with that agreement a little later in my speech. Let us talk about Western Australia and what this budget delivers for disabled people in this state. There is a crisis in accommodation support, in intensive family support and in alternatives to employment. I will explain the process. In this state it is termed the "combined application process". It is one by which people apply for funding for a particular need. Accommodation support encompasses appropriate support for people with disabilities to live in a range of accommodation options, including hostels, group homes or, indeed, their own homes. As members will understand, this includes support for personal care and independent living skills, and may range from a few

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[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 16 May 2007]

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hours of support to 24-hour care. The combined application process whereby people can apply for appropriate funding for accommodation support comes up three times a year. It is called a funding round. By way of example, in the first funding round in 2006-07, round 13, there were 556 applicants. For accommodation support funding for people in critical need of accommodation - the budget describes it as support with a full range of accommodation across the whole spectrum, not only residential but also care per week in hours - there were 257 applicants. Of those, 37, or 14.4 per cent, received the funding.

With intensive family support, the same type of combined application process arrangement comes up three times a year. By definition, individual and family support services include support to individuals to access positive and constructive day options; maintain health and develop individual skills and abilities; the provision of equipment and family support; and, importantly, respite for carers. There is also reference to therapy services. Of the 221 applicants, 22 were recommended for funding. Alternatives to employment funding, which comes under individual family support, are for people in critical need of recreation, leisure and day support. This support is designed for those who are unable to participate in supported employment. There were 78 applicants in that category, of whom 35 were recommended for funding. There is a significant shortfall and unmet need.

Under the heading "Significant Issues and Trends", the preamble to the budget states that an increased ageing population, a growing life expectancy, the increase in survival rates of people with severe and profound disabilities, changing patterns of care, changing community expectations and a sustained increase in the number of people with disabilities have led to significant demand. That seems to display a culture of negativity: "We've lost the fight. The demand is so great that we will never meet it." The budget also refers to the problems that are being faced as a result of the increasing number of Western Australians who require care. In these sorts of debates, it is important that we do not simply knock things, be negative, or point out deficiencies and flaws; rather, we should go some way towards offering solutions. We must do something to overcome this significant flaw and deficiency in the combined application process. The process must change.

By way of example, Mathew is 44 years old. He suffers from epilepsy and has an intellectual disability. He lives with his mother, Mary, who is 74 years of age. Mathew works at the active workshop for 20 hours a week and is provided with a small amount of funds so that he can go out for four hours, three times a month. Mathew and Mary recently moved from the family home to a unit to enable Mathew to catch a bus to work. Mathew is very demanding of Mary's time. He is a light sleeper and regardless of the time that he wakes he thinks it is the start of the day. After 44 years of caring for Mathew, Mary is tired and very anxious about the future. For 10 years she has been trying to secure accommodation support under the combined application process. It is not unusual for people to apply 10 or 15 times. It is a revolving-door process and a paper-application process. Indeed, it is a paper war. We must get ahead of the game. Various organisations have predicted that we are \$20 million behind the eight ball. That problem can be fixed only with a significant injection of funds. We need to identify the data and the need, and to get ahead of the game and predict new applicants as they come on stream. Matthew is not a new case; he is 44 years old, his mother is 74, she has been caring for him all that time, and she is getting old and tired. There should be a 65-year cut-off for a carer's responsibility. That has been recommended by the Disability Coalition of Western Australia. The coalition consists of ACROD WA, Carers WA, Committed About Securing Accommodation, the Development Disability Council of WA, Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre, Headwest and People with Disabilities WA. The coalition made some recommendations to deal with this revolving-door syndrome. In my time as a general practitioner, if I had a patient who was getting old and who needed accommodation support such as hostel accommodation or a nursing home, that person would be assessed by an aged care assessment team. An aged care assessment team is just that. It is a team that assesses. It assesses the family situation by talking to the family and to friends to get a true feel of the priority of need for the person. Those poor carers just keep sending in reams of paper. There is no on-the-ground team assessment of the true priority for people. This leads to frustration and, many times, this combined application process for accommodation support requires more than 200 people to redo the paperwork and reapply. It is frustrating, it is belittling and it is a paper war. A bowl of funds is needed to help them get ahead of the game. Someone needs to predict and plan the data. We know the Matthews out there; we just need to do the work. We should know that he comes on stream for accommodation support when his mother reaches the age of 65. We need an aged care assessment and selection process for people needing this support.

Although the budget shows a 10 per cent steady-as-she-goes growth funding, there is a significant problem with the lowly pay rates for carers. The preamble in the budget refers to workforce planning being a major issue facing disability service providers. Non-government disability service providers report that they are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain staff. There are not a sufficient number of carers. The likelihood of attracting carers is low. The report "Workforce Planning in the Disability Services Sector" of March 2006 by the Western Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry identified this issue. The average carer of people with

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disabilities in Western Australia today is \$60 worse off a week than a similar worker with similar certification in aged care and nursing. The report refers to people's reasons for working in the area of disability services, and under "Work is of interest" more than 70 per cent of people responded positively. Under "Best Aspects of Working in Disability Services Sector", 65 per cent indicated that it was rewarding and challenging. Under "Worst Aspects of Working in the Disability Services Sector", 50 per cent responded that it was the low pay. We need to address the low pay rates for people working in disability services. I was present when the "Workforce Planning in the Disability Services Sector" report commissioned by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia was released in March 2006. Hon Margaret Quirk was also there as she was the Minister for Disability Services - there have been a few changes since then. Recommendation 7 states -

*It is recommended that an immediate "catch up" pay increase be provided to support workers in Government funded disability services to bring pay rates in the disability services sector into line with those in the health and community services sector. Moreover, future support worker increases need to be linked to improved indexation on Government contracts and service agreements.*

That leads me to the next issue.

[Member's time extended.]

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** The other significant challenge that will not be addressed by the steady-as-she-goes 10 per cent growth rate within the budget is the cost of services. If members turn to page 856 of the budget and read the fourth dot point, they will see that it refers to the workforce planning issues. It states -

Low rates of unemployment, the resources boom and competition from other human services sectors have created these staffing problems which in turn are putting pressure on non-government organisations to maintain services for people with disabilities.

As I said earlier, over half the work outlined in the budget to provide services for the disabled in Western Australia is assigned to external services and non-government organisations.

I refer to page 8 of the *Economic and Fiscal Outlook* and the table of major economic aggregates. It refers to the wage price index growth in 2006-07 being 4.5 per cent. In 2007-08 it is 4.25 per cent. The consumer price index growth is 4.3 per cent and the 2007-08 budget estimate is three per cent. A budget reference for disability services deals with controlled grants and subsidies. The state index prediction for grants and subsidies both for external and internal providers is stated. It states that the state indexation provided to the non-government human services sector is based on a composite wage cost index of 3.3 per cent and 2.9 per cent in 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11. I suggest that those grants and subsidies with that indexation will not keep up with the cost of services that are external but are provided by both internal and external providers. We are behind the eight ball and the situation is getting worse; it is being pinched. There are significant problems with accommodation support deficiencies and significant issues with low pay rates for carers, and the cost of services has not been appropriately indexed to make this the effective budget it should be. Although we are steady as she goes, there are significant crises out there that this budget does not address.

In the short time I have left to speak I will put on my other hat of spokesman for the seniors portfolio. I will speak on some of the local issues in my electorate very shortly. The Association of Independent Retirees has forwarded to me a couple of what I would suggest are very significant and valid recommendations. It recommends that consideration be given to exempting, fully or partly, the stamp duty on properties purchased by retirees who relocate to alternative accommodation. The seniors whom I represent and who put this proposal to me are self-funded retirees. Many of these people need to relocate to be closer to family members and medical and hospital services or because other accommodation is more suitable to their changing lifestyle, health needs or ageing issues. They propose that consideration be given to exempting stamp duty, either fully or partly, for those retirees who need to relocate their residences for the reasons I outlined.

Another issue that the Association of Independent Retirees brought to my attention is the indexation of state government superannuation pensions, which is often the only income that retirees have. The association gave an example of where Centrelink-administered pensions have been indexed since 1997. Centrelink uses whichever is greater - the consumer price index formula or 25 per cent of the male total average weekly earnings. The association claims that the same formula should be applied to state government superannuation. The association requests that urgent action be taken to amend the basis on which the Government Employees Superannuation Board's administered payments are indexed. The recommendation is that the basis of indexation for this pension be amended from CPI alone to either the CPI or 25 per cent of the MTAW, whichever is greater.

In the short time available to me I will refer to some local issues. There is very little in the budget for my electorate. It adds salt to the wound, because not only has the town of Esperance, which is in my electorate, been

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flooded twice in the past 12 months, but it has now been leaded. I thank the Parliament for appointing the parliamentary inquiry into that matter. On behalf of the residents of Esperance, I thank the committee's genuine inquiry into this issue.

Esperance has been allocated \$3 million. The January flood brought the minister to the town of Esperance and she found the Fire and Emergency Services Authority centre knee deep in water. The minister promised the town \$3 million for a new FESA co-located centre. It was very encouraging to see that allocation in the budget.

The South Coast Highway upgrade is important for the increased truck traffic along South Coast Highway, particularly with the opening of the Ravensthorpe nickel operation that will come on stream at the end of this year or early 2008. An amount of \$2 million has been allocated in the budget for the construction of passing lanes on and widening of South Coast Highway. The local people will be reassured, because the community was concerned about the danger that road would pose with an increase of 52 truck movements per day, taking nickel to Esperance and backloading with sulfur.

The most hurtful thing in this budget is that funds have not been allocated to the Esperance Residential College. The college is associated with the Esperance Senior High School and accommodates 105 students, but was built to accommodate only 85. We have a booming economy and a \$2.7 billion nickel mine on our doorstep, yet we do not have provision for boarders at the residential college so that they can attend the Esperance Senior High school. That was almost promised to us. Members of the board of the residential college, of which I am one, made representations to the minister. We had a very good argument based on increasing numbers and the current demand. The new Anglican private school may also increase demand and, through some arrangement, be able to access a number of places in that institution. That is a major disappointment.

There are some concerns about the Chester Pass Road. I know that the Albany end of the road has received some attention, but some of the northern parts are positively dangerous. It was quoted to me that 10 per cent of Western Australia's wheat crop goes down that road to Albany. That is a significant amount, and with the road trains during harvest, and the high number of tourists using the road, a severe accident is waiting to happen. There have been some accidents already resulting in injury or loss of life. With 2.4 metres of bitumen, and no shoulders, the last dog on a road train is positively dangerous. That is disappointing, because that road needs to have some significant money spent on it.

I look forward to the approval by the Economic Regulation Authority of a desalination plant in Esperance. We really need the water for Western Australia, and we have just okayed a nearly \$1 billion project for a second desalination plant in Western Australia. Western Australia has the environment for United Utilities, which wants to spend \$450 million on a plant, and has ready access to electricity produced by gas turbines by Burns Rowe Worley in Esperance. We need to move along in Esperance and develop the region in this way.

**MR P.B. WATSON (Albany - Parliamentary Secretary)** [7.33 pm]: It gives me great pleasure, in speaking on the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Bill (No. 1) 2007 and the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Bill (No. 2) 2007, to compliment the Treasurer on a tremendous budget. I am not talking about its benefits for only the people of Albany; it is a tremendous budget for everyone. When I was asked what I needed for the people of Albany, I said tax relief for first home buyers. It is very important for our future. People in the community are making lots of money in investment houses, which will probably take money from their own children. It means that many young people cannot buy houses. The fact that no stamp duty is now payable on houses up to \$500 000 in value will result in a saving of \$20 000 to \$25 000 for young people going into their own homes. That first home is very important. The federal government had encouraged too many people to overstretch. We have been very lucky with the interest rates and the Western Australian economy, which is keeping the government going. People are allowed to build up their wealth, but they build up a lot of debt as well. A lot of people are overextending and buying these extra houses. Once there is a dip - there will be a dip in the near future - there will be many houses on the market, which will probably help our first home buyers. At the moment there is no way that they can get into their first home. We have given them that opportunity, and I congratulate the Premier, the Treasurer and all those involved in this decision.

One issue that I want to raise, which is a little out of left field, is the Olympics.

**Mr G. Snook:** In Albany?

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** No. As I said, it is a bit out of left field. We put in a bid, but we missed out by a couple of dollars!

As an ex-athlete, I am very concerned that the Olympics will be held in Beijing. I was in China about 13 or 14 months ago. I like to walk or run in the morning, but when we did that on the first day we were in Shanghai, everybody got crook with respiratory problems. I believe the Olympics is becoming too commercial. Since

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1992, when we had the Coca-Cola Olympics, people from the Olympic movement have been making decisions for themselves and nobody else. I would hate it if my son or daughter were going to the Olympics in China. It will be okay for the swimmers because their events are held indoors, but it will put at risk the health of the athletes who compete in outdoor events such as the 50-kilometre bike ride, the marathon, which is 44.2 kilometres, or 26 miles and 385 yards in the old language, and the 10 000 and 5 000 metre track events. The people in Beijing say that they will turn off the factories two or three weeks beforehand. What a load of rubbish! When we were in China, we noticed that one of the main concerns was the sandstorms from the Gobi Desert. There was sand all over the place, on cars and in the air. Our athletes will be sent to China. Some athletes have already been sent to China, and they have developed really serious respiratory problems. It will not get any better. China might turn off its factories, but the pollution will still be in the air. These people will be put at risk.

When I was younger, I was an idealistic person; I wanted to go to the Olympics and represent my country. Athletes did not get any money for it, but we trained seven days a week because we had a dream to go to the Olympics. Unfortunately, it was not an equal playing field when I went to the Olympics in Mexico because the city is at an altitude of 7 500 feet. The athletes who were not born at high altitudes had problems with sickness. At that stage, the Olympics had to be held on that continent. Instead of taking into account the fact that the city caused health problems, the Olympics were held there anyway. I am sure that the Olympics are being held in China for political reasons, plus China has paid a lot of money to host the Olympics. I am extremely disappointed with the Olympic Movement, and I have been for quite a long time. The people in the Olympic Movement should put the interest of the athletes first instead of their own political ambitions or their own pockets. It is an absolute disgrace.

Albany did very well in the 2007-08 budget. I heard the members for Wagin and Stirling say that Albany did well. The Albany Port Authority has been allocated \$3.785 million to enhance the rail access and \$500 000 for minor works at the port. What will that money do? It will provide better facilities for the grain that is brought to the port from the electorates of the members for Wagin and Stirling. When the woodchips are transported from the member for Stirling's electorate, there will be better access as a result of that allocation of \$3.785 million. Extra rail access will be provided so that more carriages can be put on the trains. I must congratulate Brad Williamson and his group at the Albany port; they do a tremendous job, especially with the woodchips. A Japanese company has built a ship called the *Albany* just for the Albany-Japan route. It is tremendous that this company has that much confidence in the future of the woodchip industry in Albany. There are three major players in Albany and they all make tremendous contributions to our community. When woodchips were first transported to Albany, I was very sceptical, but these companies are great corporate citizens. They do a great job for the community. They provide a lot of jobs in the community and inject a lot of money into the community. In education and training, an amount of \$550 000 has been allocated for new training equipment for building and construction and automotive courses at Great Southern TAFE, Albany campus. Lydia Rozlapa and her staff at Great Southern TAFE do a tremendous job. They are part of the revolution in Western Australia, because they are helping to get apprentices into our workforce. I congratulate them.

Funding has also been allocated for school maintenance: \$27 000 for Flinders Park Primary School; \$127 000 for North Albany Senior High School, which it desperately needs; and \$29 000 for Spencer Park Preprimary School. Main Roads has received an allocation of \$2.7 million for land acquisition for various properties affected by the future construction of stages 1 and 2 of the Albany ring-road. That is another boost for the member for Stirling, and perhaps also for the member for Wagin, because that will keep trucks away from the roundabout at the intersection of Albany Highway and Port Road, Albany. That roundabout is a bottleneck. It is an accident waiting to happen. The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure has opened the first stage of that ring-road, which is named Menang Road in honour of our Aboriginal people in Albany. That is a tremendous fillip for our region.

The Country High Schools Hostels Authority has been allocated \$8.9 million to complete the redevelopment of Albany residential college. The students at that college are from the electorates of the members for Wagin and Stirling. They are not from my electorate. The total cost of that project is \$10.9 million. An amount of \$4.17 million has been allocated to the Great Southern Development Commission towards the construction of the Albany entertainment centre. An amount of \$1.8 million has been allocated towards the redevelopment of Albany Regional Hospital. This is well overdue. A consultancy group was brought in. That process has taken two years. The opposition and the local media have been very critical of that, and so have I. I have spoken to the Minister for Health, and he is not happy about it either. A decision has eventually been made by that group. That decision has gone to Neale Fong and to the WA Country Health Service, and they are looking at it. The fact that it has taken two years is not good enough.

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I turn now to the Water Corporation. I congratulate the government and Country Labor for putting a stop to the proposal to extract water from the Yarragadee -

**Mr J.E. McGrath:** A big backflip!

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** The member says it is a backflip. An investigation was done into that proposal, and it found that it should not go ahead. Mick Murray, the member for Collie-Wellington, worked very hard, along with me and the other Country Labor members, in opposing that proposal. We were not like the country Liberals. They have no office bearers, they have not had a meeting, and they do not do anything for country people. Country Liberals is a great name. I would like to see the financial report at the end of the year. Probably the bar bill will be pretty high, but there will be nothing else!

An amount of \$122 000 has been allocated to the Department of Sport and Recreation for the Albany Surf Life Saving Club so that it can extend its clubrooms. The Albany Surf Life Saving Club is a tremendous part of my community. All the surf-lifesaving clubs around the state do a tremendous job. I am a patron of the Albany Surf Life Saving Club. The Albany Surf Life Saving Club has won the award for best country surf-lifesaving club quite a few times. I think it has also won an award for being the best surf-lifesaving club in Western Australia. The age groups at the club range from seven or eight years to the 60s. The club is a tremendous part of the community. Celia Waugh and the group there, and John Beaton, the retiring president, have done a tremendous job for our community. I consider it an honour that I could represent that club to help it get that money for its new clubrooms.

*The West Australian* had a crack at the budget. I think the country papers did a bit better in their analysis of the budget. I was in Melbourne recently and I happened to pick up a copy of a paper there. There was actually a whole page in that paper that was critical of the federal government. I thought: sedition, sedition! We do not see things like that in our papers in Western Australia! It was great to be in Melbourne and be able to read three papers with different points of view. Unfortunately, we get only one opinion in this state. I do not know whether that is due to lack of money, or whatever. I do not think the people in our community get the proper message all the time. That does not apply just to the government. It applies also to the opposition, and to personalities such as sportspeople. That is a very dangerous situation to be in.

I also congratulate the government on the outcome of the finance brokers issue. We have been through what happened and what should have happened. Maybe it is disappointing that it has taken so long to achieve an outcome. I have lost some of my constituents who were victims of finance brokers and who have not got their money back. However, I think the overall result is pleasing. I congratulate all those people concerned. I know that various ministers in this place have been involved with this issue. I think it is a tremendous thing that we can look after those people who, through their own trust, put money into the system, and were let down severely. We can blame governments or departments. All we have to do is make sure that something like that never happens again.

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** But it did with Westpoint.

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** Yes.

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** It's the same thing.

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** Yes.

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** It's criminal behaviour.

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** Yes. People can blame everybody else. All we have to do is make sure it does not happen again. That is just the way it is. It is done; let us get on with it.

Child obesity really concerns me. I have been going to school assemblies for about six or seven years. It frightens me to see the size of some of the children. In the lower grades, they are not too bad. However, when I go back to the schools and see those children in the higher grades, I think to myself that they cannot be the same children I saw one or two years ago. Then I look at the parent with the child and say, "Well, there's the role model." We can do everything possible in schools, but if the parents do not do anything about their children, the system cannot be blamed. When I was coming to Parliament this morning, I heard something on the radio about blocking television advertisements at certain times of the day and night for people who eat fast food. I do not really know if that is the answer, because if the parents at home do not take responsibility for their child's obesity, it makes it very difficult for the schools.

I will now talk about a few of my constituents. Albany Senior High School became the first state and country high school to win the final of the United Nations Youth Association WA Hammarskjold Security Council competition, ending 13 years' domination of the competition by private schools. I congratulate Albany Senior

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 16 May 2007]

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High School students Daniel Martin and Kaggen Ausma, and their history teacher, Will Richards, on winning this prestigious competition. Will takes children away every year to these competitions. He is a tremendously dedicated teacher. He is very well thought of, not only at Albany Senior High School, but also throughout the education department. I congratulate not only the children, but also Will for his continuing efforts in taking on the big city schools and the private schools. Those two students reached the final round of 15 out of 120 teams by successfully representing the United States in the sixth preliminary round, eloquently arguing America's position in resolutions on the question of global water security and the question of Timor-Leste, and a third impromptu resolution on the question of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; that is, North Korea. In the process of winning the shield, the boys also won the best regional team award, with Kaggen also winning the award for the best participant in the finals. They will now go on to represent WA with second-place getter, Sacred Heart College, in the national final, competing for the Evatt Trophy in Adelaide towards the end of the year.

I also congratulate Nathan Ridgers from North Albany Senior High School, I think, who was the year 12 "Follow the Dream" student in 2006. He has now been accepted into the indigenous aerospace initiative. He has the opportunity to become a trainee pilot. That is tremendous. This is a program that seeks to give young indigenous people a chance to follow their dreams. It is great to see that Nathan Ridgers has done very well.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** I now refer to sporting achievements. Craig Tonkin, the captain of North County Cricket Club, ended another fantastic season by being named Albany Cricket Association's A-grade cricketer of the year for the third year in a row. He also picked up the batting aggregate award and the batting average trophy for the A-grade all-rounder of the year, and the captain's player of the year trophy. Daryl Robinson from Collingwood Park Cricket Club won the bowling aggregate trophy and the bowling average trophy. In the B-grade competition, Brad Hopperton from Railways won the cricketer of the year award and the captain's award for player of the year. Ashley Haddock from Manypeaks won the best bowling aggregate award and his team mate Keith Kinnear picked up the best bowling average award. The North County captain Adam Pumphrey won the batting aggregate and average awards and his team mate Glen Battersby won the all-rounder of the year award. Manypeaks' captain Paul Keen was nominated player of the grand final, in which Manypeaks won its third grand final in a row. The Syd Harper trophy, which is a trophy in memory of a tremendous sporting personality from Albany, was awarded to David Pyle from Manypeaks for the under-21 cricketer of the year. Matt Clothier won the prestigious Joe Mengola award for the most outstanding junior cricketer. Sixteen-year-old Matt had a fantastic season during which he represented Albany at the Junior Country Week for the fourth year in a row and was selected for the state trials. He played in the Senior Country Week team that made it into the finals and he played at the Western Australian Cricket Association. The achievement he is most proud of is playing in the country all-stars team. This gave him the honour of playing at the WACA twice in one month, which he described as an amazing experience. Young Albany cricketer Viv Paver was recognised as being one of the best batsmen in Western Australia when he took the batting aggregate and average awards in the WACA district under-17 competition. Playing for South Perth, he had an average of 120.67. His highest score was 213 not out. All the country kids come to Perth. It is so easy for them to win against the Perth people. That topped off a big season for him after being a selectors' captain of the state under-17 team. Viv is hoping to be selected for the state under-19 side next year and is working hard on his goal to play cricket professionally.

David Stone won the Albany Basketball Association junior sportsman of the year award. David, a 15-year-old, is a member of the Albany Raiders development squad and was also a runner-up in the under-19 best and fairest award this year. David is a talented and passionate basketballer. He has given a lot to local basketball and is completing a course to become a level 1 umpire this year. Rob Wally is a well-known name in the Albany community and in basketball and sport generally. He received the prestigious Reside Family trophy for his immense contribution to the association as a player, umpire, coach and committee member. Rob is also passionate about local basketball, especially the development of junior players. He has been doing great work with the Raiders under-16 boys development team. As a coach, Rob teaches young players how to be professional in their approach to all aspects of the game and he has a great rapport with the parents of the players.

The Middleton Beach Bowling Club completed a clean sweep of the lower grade southern pennant grand finals. Last year was the only other time in the history of the competition that that had been done, and that was achieved by an Albany bowling club. The men's division 1 winners were Mick Jones, Ian Rout, Bob Edwards, Rex Webster, Allen Ashworth, Jim McKay, Jack Higgins, Brian Mitchell, the evergreen Lou Mancini, Merv Bennett, John Robertson, and Merv Holland. The men's division 3 winners were Bruce Small, Tim Scott, David Angel, John Evans, Bob Jefferies, Graham Davies, Victor Misfud, Kevin Williams, Allen Ray, Gerard Lanigan, George



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Hull and Keith Cunningham. The ladies division 1 winners were Margaret Siviour, Fay Jenkin, Lyn Wansborough, Margaret Witham, Sue Milne, Val Winfield, Lynne Danks and Glenys Hemley. The ladies division 2 winners were Sharlene Byatt, Leone van Heeren, Beryl Cooper, Jean Vonderling, Jean Thompson, Les Bennier, Annie Jerared and Lyn Brown.

Young David Moss dominated in the under-21 waterskiing division in a stunning debut at the national titles. David, an 18-year-old, won three gold medals, two silver medals and an overall champions trophy for competing in the trick jump and slalom events in the first time he has competed in the under-21 division. David is a talented skier who trains hard one-on-one with his dad and goes to Perth for several coaching sessions a year with skiing legend Ryan Green. He has a bright career in the sport and can look forward to greater achievements in coming years.

Mr Acting Speaker, I was told to keep my speech to 10 minutes tonight, but there is an issue in my electorate at the moment about people paying money to put down bores. We have approached the Minister for Water Resources about this issue. The new licensing administration fee follows a four-year consultation process with community, business and industry stakeholders. The result of the consultation process was that a user-pays model was needed to improve the management of water resources in Western Australia. Both the Western Australian Farmers Federation and the Liberal Party lobbied the state government to join the National Water Initiative. A major reason for encouraging WA to join was to secure the water rights it provides to licence holders. The licensing system will give horticulturalists, orchardists, aquaculturists, vegetable growers, farmers and commercial water users certainty with their operations. It will provide a guarantee of water access in perpetuity. Licensed users will be able to expand their operations in the knowledge of guaranteed access and be able to trade unused allocated water on the open market. Western Australian water licence administration fees involve a user-pays principle. It takes greater effort to administer a water licence with a large water entitlement than one with a lesser water entitlement. It is estimated that administering a licence for a water entitlement up to 5 000 kilolitres will take about seven hours and administering a licence for a water entitlement greater than five gigalitres about 100 hours. Licences for larger entitlements require a constant review of annual production summaries, monitoring reports such as hydrogeological and aquifer reviews and more regular compliance. These reporting requirements are not required for smaller licences, and compliance checks are less frequent. The Minister for Water Resources, John Kobelke, said that to ensure producers' needs are protected, he is open to discussion in areas where it can be shown that producers' needs are not protected, and a variation is needed to give that security. That issue was raised because, as members know, the bores that people put down in the Albany region at Little Grove, Goode Beach and Iluka are taking water from the local supply and, therefore, those people must pay a licence fee. I am sure that something could be sorted out if we had proper dialogue with the minister.

**Mr G. Snook:** Country Labor (WA) will have to lift its game.

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** Yes, but people want to make sure their water is there when people are taking it.

**Mr G. Snook:** Yes, you have to manage it; for sure.

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** Yes, I think it is fair. I am concerned that people have to pay \$200 for a bore when other people, probably 10 or 20 kilometres down the road, do not. That is the main issue and it may be that there are ways of negotiating that. I know that the member for South Perth is busting to get up and say what a great budget it is. I congratulate the Treasurer on the very balanced budget.

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** Thank you!

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** Paying off the Fiona Stanley Hospital will save \$178 million a year in interest, and I am sure a lot of that money will make its way to Albany. I fully support the bill.

**MR J.E. McGRATH (South Perth) [7.58 pm]:** I heard what the member for Albany said about me possibly making some complimentary remarks about the budget. I actually used to live in Belmont, which is the Treasurer's seat. After looking at the budget, I think maybe I would be better off living in Belmont than in South Perth. Moving to South Perth might have been an unwise decision, with the benefit of hindsight, if I had known that the person who was my former member would become the Treasurer one day.

My review of the budget papers revealed very scant reference to the electorate of South Perth. That is not surprising, as the people of South Perth have not come to expect too much from this government. However, let us look at what we did get. We got an upgrade of the main sewer lines in South Perth. Do you, Mr Acting Speaker, know why we got that? Do you recall two years ago, in May 2005, when the sewer lines burst along the freeway near the Mill Point Road exit off the Kwinana Freeway? The whole city of Perth was gridlocked. I was in West Perth at the time and to get home I had to drive through the Polly Farmer tunnel - a great bit of

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infrastructure - and get onto Great Eastern Highway on the other side of the casino. I finally managed to get to South Perth about three hours later. I guess this was infrastructure the government could not afford not to repair because it would be very embarrassing if another situation like that arose. It was hardly a win for the residents of South Perth because it is infrastructure that will not be visible to them.

Let us look at other problems in South Perth. The more I look, the more I think we are getting a lot of delays. I will pay credit to the government where it is due, because we got some money for our schools. The schools that received funding were Curtin Primary School, Kensington Preprimary School, Kensington secondary school, Kent Street Senior High School and Manning Primary School. However it must be noted that both Como Primary School and South Perth Primary School missed out.

**Mr M.P. Whitely** interjected.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** I will explain that, if the member is prepared to listen. I am coming to that. I know the member for Bassendean knows something about that area because he went to school there.

I am wondering whether South Perth Primary School missed out because it is in the heart of Liberal territory. I would hate to think that was the case because if it was I would have to condemn the government. Both of those schools missed out on undercover areas to shelter their kids in extreme weather. Como Primary School has been asking for some time for an undercover area. Here is a picture that was in the local paper last week. It is headed, "No cover for students". I ask the Treasurer to look at that. There are children in Como Primary School, the next generation of Western Australians, who are still waiting for an undercover assembly area. This has been going on for some time. The school has been talking to the Department of Education and Training for something like 14 years to get an undercover area for the kids. The government gave Como Primary School some money to upgrade the administration area but nothing for the undercover area. I spoke to some of the parents and they felt that the school could have got by without the administration area being upgraded and that it was a much greater priority to give the kids some shelter from the extremes of our weather. I will continue to fight for that. This has been going on for too long. Como Primary School was told some time ago that it was number one on the list for both an administration block upgrade and an undercover area, but somehow they have been shunted down the list again.

The same applies to South Perth Primary School. It has a very old structure that used to be used for assemblies. It is not big enough or suitable anymore. The school needs a proper undercover area. Every school in my electorate, other than South Perth and Como primary schools, has one. I will continue to work hard for both of these public schools, which produce a lot of good students.

While we are talking about delays and schools waiting for infrastructure projects, another unexpected delay has occurred with the train station in South Perth. The people of South Perth expect that a train station will be built in South Perth by 2010. One might ask why they expect that to happen then, given that the rail line to Mandurah will be completed by the end of this year. We have been assured by the minister that it will be completed this year even though it is running late. Even though they are not happy about not having a train station built right away, the people of South Perth have been patient because they have been told that one will be built in 2010. On 13 September 2005, Hon Simon O'Brien asked a question of the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure in the other place. The question reads -

Is it still the intention of the government to construct a railway station at South Perth in the future; and, if so, when?

The answer given by Hon Adele Farina was quite categorical. It reads -

The government has given a commitment to build a station at South Perth by 2010.

Soon after that, I had reason to contact the minister about a number of issues regarding the railway station in South Perth. I asked the minister about the future of the South Perth station. In a letter from the minister's chief of staff, Rob Giles, which was sent to me on 21 December 2006, he states that the government is committed to building a station at South Perth by 2010. When I perused the budget papers in my office, I noticed under the heading "Service 4: Integrated Land and Transport Policy Development" the subheading "*Major Achievements 2006-07*". The sixth dot point states that plans for station precincts at Mandogalup, Success, Canning Bridge and South Perth have commenced. I thought that was good. Even though we are dealing with the 2006-07 financial year, the plans have commenced and we will get our station. Under the heading "South Perth Train Station" in the *Economic and Fiscal Outlook*, it reads "Detailed planning and design for a station at South Perth will commence from 2010-11." We were told that South Perth would have a station by 2010. Now the budget papers reveal that all we can expect in 2010-11 is detailed planning. The budget papers state that as part of the New MetroRail project, provision was made through advance infrastructure and rail alignment to accommodate

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the proposed station in South Perth following the commissioning of rail services. The budget papers reveal that \$700 000 has been allocated for 2010-11 in the forward estimates. We all know that \$700 000 will not build a railway station. The people of South Perth will soon learn that they will not get a station by 2010. If planning and design of the station commences in 2010-11, given the delays the people of South Perth have already experienced in so many other areas, who knows when that station will be up and running. This issue does not affect only the people of South Perth. One of the main reasons that the station will be built is to accommodate the roughly 700 000 people who visit Perth Zoo each year, which is situated close to the site of the proposed South Perth station. In future, people from the northern and southern suburbs will be able to travel to the Zoo via rail. Those people will also have to wait for the South Perth train station. At a time when we are trying to inject new life into our tourism industry to improve it, tourists will also have to wait. A train station in South Perth will help in that regard; however, now that infrastructure project has been further delayed. That is another reason that we are not happy about certain aspects of this budget.

Moving on to another area of delay experienced by the people of South Perth, I refer to underground power. South Perth has been very proactive when it comes to underground power. Before the underground power program was introduced by the Court government, the City of South Perth had already held talks with Western Power about trying to implement an underground power program in the electorate. When the program started, the electorate of South Perth obviously expected to be one of the frontrunners for the installation of underground power. Round 1 of the underground power implementation in Como west was completed and round 2 in Mill Point Road was completed. In round 3, it was decided to do the work in Como east. I still wonder why it was called Como east, because it is at the end of Como that is the closest to Canning Bridge. I would have thought that was Como west. It is a bit like East Victoria Park. I always wonder why East Victoria Park is not called west Victoria Park, because it is on the wrong side of Victoria Park to be called "east", unless I have my compass bearings wrong. The Como east installation of underground power has already been delayed by 12 months. It was supposed to be started by mid-2006. We have since found out that it will not start until August 2007, so that amounts to another 12 months delay for rolling out underground power. This electorate is not a long way from the city; it is fairly central.

**Mr M.J. Cowper:** It's a nine-iron away.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** I agree with the member for Murray; it is a nine-iron from the GPO, albeit a good nine-iron.

We are saying that these programs are continually delayed, and it is very frustrating. People in other parts of my electorate have been asking me when they are going to get underground power. People closer to South Terrace in the Collier region are asking why they are missing out. Kensington has had terrible problems with trucks running into overhead powerlines that are sagging too low across the streets.

**Mr T.G. Stephens:** They desperately need it, don't they; it's all those cyclones that come through so often in South Perth and reduce the powerlines! Why the hell would you want it in South Perth before the regional areas of the state get underground power?

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** The member for Central Kimberley-Pilbara will understand that the implementation of underground power is far more suited to the metropolitan area than it is to the country.

**Mr T.G. Stephens:** That's absolute nonsense.

Several members interjected.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** We have more outages.

**Mr T.G. Stephens:** Stand in the queue on the basis of need.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** We would probably have more power outages in Como and Kensington than occurs in the electorate of the member for Central Kimberley-Pilbara. These people pay rates and taxes and they are entitled to be given the same consideration -

**Mr T.G. Stephens:** People in my towns go for weeks without power after cyclones; absolute weeks.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** Cyclones are an extreme; the member cannot come down here and tell us that he lives in an area in which cyclones occur.

**Mr T.G. Stephens:** They are not an extreme; we get five a year on average. Stand in the queue, is all I'm saying.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** It is a fact of life that cyclones do not occur in the metropolitan area.

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**The SPEAKER:** Order! I am sure the member for Central Kimberley-Pilbara will be able to make his contribution to this debate at a later stage. The member for South Perth is having some difficulty continuing with his presentation. If the member for Central Kimberley-Pilbara wishes to contribute, he should do so in the normal manner.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** Thank you, Mr Speaker; I am very happy that you are in the chair. That is the underground power debate. If the member for Central Kimberley-Pilbara wants to talk to some of the people in Kensington, they will explain it to him. Where does the member live?

**Mr T.G. Stephens** interjected.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** He lives in Subiaco; he does not live up north where the cyclones occur. Why does he not go and live where the cyclones occur, then we might listen to him. We would like him to live up there and experience what it is like. I live in my electorate and he does not.

Several members interjected.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** I will move on. Another controversial subject in my electorate -

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, members!

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** For some time I have been advocating an on-ramp on Manning Road. Mr Speaker would understand Manning Road very well because it is one of his old stamping grounds.

**The SPEAKER:** I do.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** The people of Manning, Salter Point, Waterford, Karawara, Bentley and East Victoria Park who travel along Manning Road and head south to the burgeoning areas in the southern corridor of the metropolitan area are still campaigning for an on-ramp to the freeway where Manning Road meets Kwinana Freeway. We asked the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure about this because it is a safety issue. People who take that route must turn right onto Kwinana Freeway, go to Canning Bridge, do another right-hand turn and then come back onto the Kwinana Freeway heading south. Drivers are merging with other traffic that is speeding along at 100 kilometres an hour. It is a dangerous situation. All we have asked of the minister is to consider building an on-ramp. The minister's reply was that it will cost \$10 million and that the government is not ready to look at it yet. She also said that if the people in that area want it, the Liberals should build it. That is a shocking attitude for the minister to take. Obviously, she sees that there are not many votes for the ALP in the area even though that part of South Perth used to be a very strong ALP area. I will continue to push very hard for an on-ramp. The minister said that if the Liberals want it so much it should be included in their budget before the next election. That is a challenge I will have to take to our party room. Hopefully, I will get support.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** My main shadow portfolio is road safety. Road safety has been in the news, as we know, for some time because WA had a terrible year on the roads last year. There were 202 fatalities. So far this year there have been 93 compared with 71 at the same time last year. That is another huge hike. We are headed for a bad year on the roads unless the trend changes. The problem is that we can find no extra funding for the Safer Roads program. That is disappointing. We are disappointed that the budget contains no extra funding for road safety. The \$48 million quoted in the budget comprises \$20 million for state black spots and \$28 million for the Safer Roads program, which was part of the term-of-government agreement. Although this is good, we still expected that, given the climate of last year's terrible situation in which the minister agreed to a bipartisan and independent review into road safety, there would be extra funding put into roads. The RAC will be very disappointed. In its budget submission the RAC asked for more funding. It expected the government to put in an additional \$20 million to seal road shoulders for the new safer south west highways program; an extra \$20 million for a new local safer roads program for local roads; an additional \$5 million for black spot projects to provide a total of \$25 million for the state black spot program; and new funding of around \$2 million over the next two years to replace old red light cameras with dual purpose red light/speed cameras to improve safety at traffic light intersections. However, we see no additional funding for these programs.

I would imagine that the Office of Road Safety is not too happy about this either. The Office of Road Safety strategy, Arriving Safely, expires at the end of this year. On the subject of roads the strategy states -

Regardless of other factors, improving the safety of roads has the potential to reduce the incidence and severity of crashes with benefits for all road users, not just vehicle occupants. This is particularly

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important in rural areas, where higher speeds exist, contributing to increased risks of death and serious injury.

That was from the government's own publication, put out by the Office of Road Safety. Some road improvements were recommended in this document, Arriving Safely, which was put together after a lot of research by Monash University. Some of the engineering or planning targets that were identified included -

- treat identified Black Spots
- mass action treatments where appropriate;
- removal or protection of roadside hazards where a problem;
- undertake road safety audits at each stage of design and construction;
- increase the emphasis on safety of roads in planning;
- install shoulder sealing and profiled edgeline where fatigue-related crashes are identified as a problem; -

We know that that is a problem in the country -

- systematic evaluation of the safety outcomes of Road Enhancement Program elements to assess the safety benefits; and,
- safety analysis of the road network to determine sections with poorer safety records (in addition to Black Spot program).

Even the Office of Road Safety has identified roads as being very important in the fight to reduce the road toll. Both the Office of Road Safety and the RAC would have expected to see more funding in the Safer Roads program.

Some other aspects of the budget under road safety were a bit puzzling. For instance, the Office of Road Safety underspent its road budget by \$5 million. I wondered how this could happen. Poor implementation of the funding would mean that the department was not able to deliver benefits to the community. I think the community would be disappointed. The Road Safety Council gets funding from one-third of the Multanova revenue. If it is not spending all that money, maybe people could say that the Office of Road Safety is not running the program as efficiently as it could for the community of Western Australia.

The motorcycle problem has been in the headlines lately. It still has not been fixed. The government has been talking for some time about getting two-way cameras that can identify motorcyclists because motorcycles do not have a plate on the front of them. We saw one set up on the news the other day. There were two cameras; one was pointed in one direction and one in the other. They could detect the motorcycles going past. With the incidence of motorcycle fatalities rising all the time, this is very important. The member for Murray and I went to a road safety forum put on by 6PR the other day. By and large, we found that the motorcycle community wants to see greater enforcement. It does not want to see members of its community dying on the roads like they are at the moment.

Another problem that has been raised recently relates to the fines enforcement register. Mr Speaker, if I asked you how much money was owed to the Western Australian government in unpaid fines, how much do you think it would be?

**The SPEAKER:** One hundred million dollars.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** That was a good guess but it is not quite correct. A total of \$165 million is owed to the Western Australian government in unpaid fines.

**Mr M.J. Cowper:** You could build a new school for that.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** We could build a lot of new schools for \$165 million. We could certainly do a lot with it.

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** I'd be very interested in your recommendations for changing that, member.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** For changing the system?

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** Yes.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** The fines outstanding amounted to \$593 793, of which \$309 658 was registered in the past two years. The amount of money owed to the Fines Enforcement Registry went up by \$96 million during that time. I heard what the Treasurer said. I thought it is no good complaining about something like this if one does not have an answer. We live in a society where, disappointingly, people do not pay fines. If I get a fine, I pay it. I would think that most responsible people would pay a fine. I would think that the public would be

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staggered to see that figure. I was wondering what we should do. People used to be put in jail for not paying fines, and that system did not work. We cannot just fill up the jails with people who do not pay fines for one reason or another. Some people may genuinely be unable to pay their fines. I am not that much in favour of sending a bailiff around and taking their TV while the kids are trying to watch their favourite show. There are some terrible stories about people who have been unable to pay fines. I do not know what the answer is, but maybe we have to look at some other system under which people do community work. Apparently, even under that program, people are given a work order, but they just do not turn up to work. We need to look at the problem in a bipartisan way. There are no points to be gained one way or the other in trying to come up with a solution. It is a waste, and the worrying fact with regard to road safety is that, if people do not have respect for the fine system, they do not have respect for road safety. The largest group of people who have not paid their fines is the 39 647 who have been fined for exceeding the speed limit by between 10 and 19 kilometres an hour. They are getting speeding fines and just not paying them. The third largest group is motorists fined for exceeding the speed limit by not more than nine kilometres an hour, which is the lower end of the list, and there were 19 966 such people. A bigger worry is that many people who do not pay their fines and then lose their licences are driving without being insured, and that creates all sorts of problems if they are involved in an accident. It is clear to me that the Fines Enforcement Registry is not working. I do not know what the answer is but, for one reason or another, it is not happening.

**Mr M.J. Cowper:** Under the provisions of the original act, the police can take out an order of execution to seize property. I do not think that option has been taken up by the government.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** That is something we need to look at. We will be asking some more questions of the Attorney General, and finding out whether the system can be improved in any way, and whether we can make people more responsible for their actions. People are obviously just disregarding fines when they get them and we now have this massive backlog of outstanding fines that are clogging up the system. Something needs to be done.

In closing, I am still very happy to be representing the people of South Perth. Some of our people would have been happy with some points of the budget, especially the stamp duty relief for first home buyers for homes valued up to \$500 000. That is long overdue; it should have been done earlier, but the Treasurer was happy to keep it until the budget. I would not have been too happy if I had been a first home buyer who had bought a home in the first half of the year, and then found out that I had missed out on this very big concession. People in my electorate who are not that happy with that decision are the older people. South Perth has an ageing population, and many of those people have to downsize their houses. It is the only asset they have; they have no superannuation. That means that they go into the market to buy a smaller unit or dwelling and must pay the full rate of stamp duty. That is a bit disappointing for them. We would have preferred to see the concessions on stamp duty on home purchases applied across the board.

**MR B.S. WYATT (Victoria Park) [8.29 pm]:** I am delighted to rise this evening to address the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Bills (No. 1) and (No. 2) 2007. It is a good budget. It is a budget that I am delighted to speak to this evening. I will start my comments by referring to a particular allocation of funds by the government. The average fortnightly subsidy for a foster carer is currently \$280. This will increase to \$330 a fortnight in 2007-08, which is an 18 per cent increase. The subsidy will then increase to \$345 in 2008-09 and to \$360 in 2009-10 and will end up at \$380. That sort of subsidy a fortnight is nowhere near sufficient to cover the actual costs for a foster family that takes in a child. However, it is certainly a long-awaited recognition by the government of the generosity of that activity. The emotional distress that often goes with taking in a foster child deserves more recognition and financial recompense. This is not a big allocation, but it is certainly a significant allocation, and it is an issue that I wanted to mention straight up in my speech this evening.

I will refer to some other figures at the start of my speech. In the last two budgets, the government has provided significant infrastructure debt free for the people of Western Australia; that is, the New MetroRail project and the Fiona Stanley Hospital. This is a very significant fact. We are seeing savings of \$170 million per annum in interest payments. It is worth acknowledging that straight up. The member for South Perth mentioned a moment ago the figure of \$165 million in outstanding fines. I agree with the comments made by the member that that figure is quite outrageous. However, that figure will be saved every year because the state's assets are now provided debt free.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** Can I ask you a question, member?

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** No; I do not know whether I will have enough time to say what I want to say.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** Okay; later.

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**Mr B.S. WYATT:** If I have time, the member can go for it.

As I said, this is a good budget. It is a good budget for the people of Victoria Park. I am very lucky to have an electorate bounded by the Canning and Swan Rivers. It is an electorate that will certainly gain a lot from this budget. I have in my electorate a lot of first home buyers and a lot of people who have been feeling the impact of price rises, not just from trying to access the housing market, but also from the subsequent flow-on effects of rent increases when landlords up the rentals to get a return on their investments.

The education and training budget is something that I feel is really the bread and butter of a Labor government. A number of schools in my electorate will certainly be very happy with the moneys that have been allocated to them from the school maintenance program. I know that Arnie Taylor at Bentley Primary School will be very happy, as will Harry Tysoe at Lathlain Primary School, Kath Partridge at Sevenoaks Senior College and Dianne Tomlinson of Victoria Park Primary School. They were allocated about \$180 000 in total to undertake maintenance; in some cases, well overdue maintenance.

A number of things have been going on in my electorate due to the fact that we are in extraordinary economic times. I have mentioned previously in the house that Holyoake moved its premises into my electorate in February this year. On 22 February the Minister for Health opened those premises. No doubt, many members are familiar with Holyoake. They have probably visited the old premises in Northbridge. I encourage all members of the house to visit the new premises if they get the opportunity to do so. The chief executive officer, Margaret Jackson, is very welcoming and would love to show members around. The accommodation is quite spectacular and goes a long way towards allowing Holyoake to increase the services provided to the community for people who suffer from alcohol and drug addiction. An interesting statistic is that 70 per cent of the people who walk in the front door of Holyoake are not the people with the addiction. The reason Holyoake has been so successful is that it deals with the entire family. There are obviously significant flow-on effects for the family members of people with a drug or alcohol addiction. The move to purchase that particular building was made possible by a very generous Lotterywest grant. I thank Lotterywest for its foresight and generosity in recognising that Holyoake was not able to provide the services at that site that it has been providing them in Northbridge.

These buoyant economic times have also enabled Gambro Healthcare to open a renal dialysis unit in Cannington. That is effectively a joint venture between Gambro and the Western Australian Department of Health. That is enabling a significant number of people in my electorate to obtain renal dialysis in their community rather than have to travel a significant distance for what is a very intrusive and obviously essential procedure. Bentley Hospital is continuing to be a vital component of the government's \$140 million mental health strategy. A significant amount of cluster housing will be provided in my electorate - and also in other electorates around the state - next to Bentley Hospital. That will provide additional support for an area of Western Australia that has not been serviced adequately for a long time. The government's mental health strategy has drawn heavily from Victoria, which has an intermediate stage of mental health service provision. Until now, Western Australia has basically had Graylands Hospital, or nothing. A significant portion of homeless people in not only Western Australia but also all states have mental health problems. The provision of this cluster housing will enable people with intermediate-range mental health disabilities to move into rented accommodation, with 24-hour care. That will facilitate the integration of these people into the community and enable them to lead a normal life. Hopefully, that will mean that the families of these people will also be involved, and they will not end up homeless. That mental health initiative, combined with the proposed Fiona Stanley Hospital, is something of which the Labor Party and I are particularly proud.

I turn now to household fees and charges. Last year, the figure for household fees and charges was very attractive. That figure remains very attractive 12 months later in this budget. All Labor members of this Parliament are particularly proud of that achievement. In the past seven years, the state Labor government has reduced key household fees and charges for a representative household by \$413, or 10.8 per cent, in real inflation-adjusted terms. That is significant, because we all know that a reduction in household fees and charges enables people, particularly those at the lower end of the socioeconomic scale, to survive in an economy that sometimes produces detrimental side effects.

I now return briefly to the education portfolio. I said in my first speech in this place that education is the great social equaliser, because it provides people with the opportunity to better themselves and to move beyond what they could otherwise be provided with through inheritance. It does not matter who we are or who we are born to; a good education enables us to do anything. The budget figures indicate that the additional funding for the Getting it Right literacy and numeracy strategy will increase to 335 the number of specialist teachers working in 317 primary schools and to 36 the number of specialist teachers working in 41 high schools across the state. I am particularly proud of that achievement, and no doubt all members, certainly on this side of the house, are also

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very proud of that. I am confident that the government will continue to increase the budget allocation to education. Of course, under this Labor government, spending on education has gone up by \$177 million on last year.

One area of concern, and a matter on which the member for Roe spent a significant amount of time in his speech, is people with disabilities. This is something that I am still trying to get to the bottom of. I believe that a constituent of mine was poorly served by both the Public Trustee and the Public Advocate. She was taken into care against her will. She fought that and won. However, during the time that she was in involuntary care, her house was not looked after in any way whatsoever. She won her court case, and when she returned to her property, she found that, quite simply, it was disgusting. It was not in a condition that was fit for a lady with disabilities to live in. My staff ended up trying to find somebody to assist this lady, but they could not. This was just before Easter. At the end of the day, my staff ended up spending a significant amount of time at her house, cleaning it and making it appropriate for her to spend the Easter period there, until we could find an organisation to help her, which we have been able to do.

**Dr S.C. Thomas:** Wouldn't that be a job for the Attorney General?

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** Next time I will call him to see whether he is interested.

Although the next topic I will address is more directly relevant to the federal government in light of its regulatory powers, it is something which all members have no doubt become aware of over the past 12 months and which should be of concern to the state Parliament, regardless of areas of responsibility under our constitution; that is, the various takeover activities, particularly concerning the financial backing of private equity groups. The blood sport of takeovers - that is exactly what it is - has attracted a lot of attention due to the nature of the financial arrangements. This is not new, but it has been focused on and magnified courtesy of the recent takeover attempts on Alinta and Qantas. The kind of commentary that we have heard of late suggests that private equity is the main way in which takeovers occur. Of course, it is not. In the last financial year, it was about one per cent of all global mergers and acquisition activity. It is, and will always be, a specialised alternative to public listing to raise funds.

I have had a number of conversations with people courtesy of my membership of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, which has been particularly vocal in this area of late. However, what is interesting now is that, typically, private equity is focused on poor corporate performance. I guess it is a sign of the current world economy that such private equity resources are now available that have been able to attack what are otherwise very well run companies. Qantas is perhaps the most high-profile example that we have seen in Australia. Ralph Evans, the chief executive officer of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, recently stated -

A third reason for AICD to be interested in the private equity tsunami is one of policy. Private equity people are operating at an advantage compared with public company directors. A recent McKinsey study said the deal-makers are making money out of 'arbitrage' between the two worlds - indeed, it went on to say that they take most of the arbitrage gains in their huge fees and leave the ultimate owners not significantly better off than if they held public company shares.

That is exactly what happened with Alinta. I will come back to give some more details of Alinta shortly. However, it is clear that what was happening with Alinta, particularly in respect of Macquarie Bank, was that the natural gains that any shareholder would have had through that arrangement would otherwise be lost courtesy of the fees and the way in which the bank was proposing to structure the company once it was re-listed. The reason that private equity deals have attracted so much attention in Western Australia is due to the nature and the role of the advising banks.

I will consider a number of newspaper articles. I basically have a pile of newspaper articles from *The West Australian*, *The Australian Financial Review* and *The Australian* since 1 January this year. As members can see, this matter has copped a significant amount of media attention. It is worth considering the time frames for the proposed management buyouts of Alinta, because there were times when the board was not acting in an appropriate way. I am firmly of the view that the members of the board of Alinta, both then and now, are very respected businesspeople. In light of what happened with One.Tel and the litigation in which it was involved, we must consider the role of chairmen in these situations, because the role of the chairperson has evolved over the past few years, particularly given the case of ASIC v Rich, which is otherwise known as the Greaves case. That decision pointed to the expanded fiduciary duties of the chairperson of a corporate entity. That decision expanded the operation of section 180(1) of the Corporations Act. I refer to an article written by John Warde, a partner with Allens Arthur Robinson, and Andrew Burne, a lawyer with that firm. The article discussed the Greaves case, in which it was recognised that the chairmen and other directors holding special positions, particularly on audit committees, may hold special responsibilities when discharging their duty of care and



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diligence to the company, depending on an individual's particular responsibilities and expertise in the particular circumstances of the company. Both Alinta and Qantas have chairpersons who have that particular expertise, regardless of the fact that the Australian Institute of Company Directors does not agree with the decision handed down in that case by the New South Wales Supreme Court. However, it is clear that there is now a community expectation that a chairperson of a publicly listed company will take on greater responsibilities for acting for shareholders. That is what concerns me most with Alinta and Qantas. It is clear that the chairpersons have become too involved with the predator and have not concerned themselves with the prey. As a result, we have seen the debacle of Qantas and the resulting headlines regarding Macquarie Bank's attempts to take over Alinta, which involve a complete breakdown in that relationship. At the time that the management and a number of board members approached the management buyout, Alinta was going through a restructuring phase. *The Australian Financial Review* summed it up perfectly when it stated in an article on 13 January -

The situation for Alinta was made worse because the company was already going through a strategic review and the risk was that a gun would be held to heads of the independent directors because the MBO proposal was the only one being considered.

The company was in a very delicate situation. Instead of the CEO focusing on how the share price of the company could be improved and on digesting certain acquisitions that it had, the CEO turned to the matter of how it could buy out the company. The breakdown of the relationship between Alinta and the MacBank was clear. That relationship has been completely destroyed. I am not surprised about that in the light of the fact that Macquarie Bank was an adviser to Alinta, which then attempted to provide debt servicing to those in management who were purported to be bought out.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** Can you seek an extension of time so that I can interject afterwards? I am still waiting to make my interjection.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** I will come back to the point I was making regarding the bank's finances as private equity. It was reported in *The Australian* on Thursday, 5 April that the default option was the crux of Alinta's decision and that, under the Macquarie proposal, most shareholders would lose as Alinta was not permitted to recommend only the cash alternative. The default option was not cash but rather a mix of cash and shares in a re-listed Alinta after Macquarie had stripped out the company's high-growth assets. These are the problems when those types of conflicts of interest exist. All Western Australians were told that the conflict-of-interest arrangements had been taken into consideration. It is up to ASIC to ascertain whether there was inappropriate behaviour or possible breaches of fiduciary duty, but it is something that state members of Parliament should be concerned with. Private equity will quite rightly continue because it has a role to play. However, it is the role of the board of directors to consider their positions and exactly where their responsibilities lie when a private equity predator comes calling.

I will briefly address an issue that I hope the member for Cottesloe will speak to a little later. The legislation delisting Alinta, the Gas Corporation (Business Disposal) Act 1999, interestingly enough never got a mention during the process regarding Alinta that has now ended up with Babcock and Brown in the driver's seat. Section 10 of that act, headed "Corporate vehicle's constitution to contain certain provisions", lists a number of requirements. I do not know whether Macquarie Bank or Babcock and Brown have considered that section. I certainly hope they have now with the due diligence that they or their lawyers would have carried out. The constitution of Alinta has a number of requirements regarding where the head office is to be and where the chief executive officer is to reside. The member for Avon yesterday had great concerns about Alinta as a long-term public company being in the position of having built up a large amount of goodwill in its status as a corporate entity in Western Australia and, after becoming a public company, having the chairperson and the existing management team advising Macquarie Bank, which was seeking to buy out Alinta, yet wanting to remain in their positions. That was quite simply inappropriate and absurd. I am looking forward to the Australian Securities and Investments Commission coming out with some commentary about that. There has been a lot of commentary -

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** Michael Chaney said it was fine.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** He may have; however, I do not think Mr Chaney is right on this point.

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** I do not agree with Michael Chaney on that.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** I do not think that Mr Poynton was right on this point. I do not believe that Mr Poynton, on looking back at what has happened, would think that he was right in what happened regarding his role as

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chairman of Alinta. Certainly the markets would attest to the fact that he was not right; likewise with the CEO and a number of other managers. We are a state Parliament and we are not responsible for regulating that sort of behaviour; that is the role of the takeover panel and it is the role of ASIC. However, it is something that we do need to be interested in and concerned about. It is quite simply something that I think we will see more of as more private equity becomes involved in Australia's corporate sector. Although that in itself is not a bad thing, I have a number of concerns with the way in which these corporate entities, particularly boards of directors, behave.

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** What do you think about private equity coming in and companies like Alinta no longer standing as a unique identity on the stock exchange? They are dispersed across various trusts and listed entities. What do you think the implication of that will be?

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** The implication would be who owns it? How do we regulate it?

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** Who are they?

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** Yes, who is it? We saw that with Qantas. Qantas cannot tell us its current shareholding and who owns Qantas. Do we know whether it has breached the international shareholding cap? Qantas actually cannot tell us. Hopefully, it is shortly about to, but what will we see then? Assuming some of the figures we heard from Qantas are correct, they indicated 65 per cent foreign ownership, which is 15 per cent in excess of the cap. I imagine that there will be no benefit to the current shareholders if the requirement is to dump the excess on the market.

Mr Speaker, I want to make some concluding remarks on the budget.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** Aren't you going to take my interjection?

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** I am sorry, member for Dawesville.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** I am almost embarrassed to ask, because you obviously have a much greater financial understanding than I have of the issues.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** Not necessarily.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** I go back to the point I made right at the start about how better off we are putting aside \$1 billion for the Fiona Stanley Hospital. Can we take it down to hundreds of thousands rather than billions for comparison, to make it easier to comprehend? I do not know what the government pays on either debt or investment, but let us say you or I have \$400 000 worth of debt and we are paying that off at eight per cent interest. If we have \$100 000 worth of assets on which we are getting five or six per cent interest, how are we better off having that \$100 000 separate? Surely we would be better off having that \$100 000 reducing our debt to \$300 000 so that we are paying eight per cent on a lesser amount. The same applies with \$1 billion compared with \$3 billion or \$4 billion or whatever the current amount is.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** It will always depend on the asset being produced. I am sure governments all over the world would have no problem with borrowing money to produce -

**Dr K.D. Hames:** Until you pay for that asset, you are putting \$1 billion in a bank account earning whatever percentage it is, but it has to be less than you are paying on your debt. Why wouldn't you be better off putting the billion dollars into reducing debt and borrowing it again when you need it to pay for the hospital?

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** It may well be the case. I do not know what the interest rates are and I do not know what rate a government would get on that sort of money. That sort of query has to be addressed to the Treasurer.

**Mr T.G. Stephens** interjected.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** That is right. I would like to discuss the details, member for Dawesville -

**Dr K.D. Hames:** Sorry, I thought you might have a good answer.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** No, I do not. I could not tell the member. If the Treasurer was here, I would divert that question to him.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** You should find out because I don't think it is good.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** Okay. I thank the member for that interjection. I am not really sure what it was about, but we will move on.

Several members interjected.

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**Mr B.S. WYATT:** Before we descend into a rabble, there are a couple of things I would like to focus on in relation to state development. I have recently had something to say about state development in a discussion paper that I released. I think state development means developing our state beyond simply the resources sector. There are a couple of initiatives that have happened in the short 14 months I have been here that I am particularly pleased with. They are mentioned in the budget, and one is the sponsorship of the inaugural Western Australian Inventor of the Year Award. In 2006, 157 applications were received. A number of those were from my electorate. I will not go through them all because I do not pretend to understand exactly what the inventions do. We need to focus on encouraging this sort of innovation because when the commodity cycle turns, it will invariably turn sharply, and we will feel that. Who knows whether that will be three years or 15 years from now? We need to broaden our economic base, and this is a small but significant way in which we can encourage Western Australians to be part of that process.

I will conclude with some comments about the economic outlook for our state. It is something we are all familiar with, but I want to get it into my speech. This is from Budget Paper No 3, *Economic and Fiscal Outlook*. It states -

Western Australia's gross State product is expected to grow by 6.0% in 2006-07, significantly faster than the long-term average of 4.6% a year for the past 15 years.

Members on this side will get up and sing the virtues of this budget and members opposite will get up to speak about its evils, but the economic times are very good. I am very happy with this budget and with a large number of initiatives in it. That obviously includes the big picture of housing affordability, the first home buyer's scheme, and land tax cuts and various other tax cuts. I am also particularly focused on and interested in the areas in which we spend money. According to these forecasts in the fiscal outlook, things look good and will remain so for a number of years. That does not mean we should become profligate in the way we spend our money. It is something we need to take into account in planning in Western Australia, not just for the next two or three years, but for the next 10 or 20 years, which is certainly the responsibility of this house.

**MR G. SNOOK (Moore)** [8.58 pm]: I rise to make a contribution in response to the Treasurer's budget speech and outline a few of the views from this side of the house, particularly in relation to my portfolio responsibilities in agriculture, local government and fisheries. I will also cover a number of issues in my electorate.

There is no question that we live in extraordinary and fantastic booming times. It is probably claimed by many, and rightly so, that never before has Western Australia been in a situation in which our economy has been so strong and buoyant. That has brought with it benefits and a level of economic growth never before seen in Western Australia. That is due to a number of reasons that for the most part are outside the control and scope of government, both state and federal. There is nothing like being fortuitous or being in the right spot at the right time.

**Mr T.G. Stephens:** They reckon that when Charles De Gaulle was told it was a beautiful day outside he said, "Oh, thank you; thank you." He took credit for the beautiful, sunny weather. I guess the image speaks for itself.

**Mr G. SNOOK:** It could do. I say to the member for Central Kimberley-Pilbara, who is a great advocate for country Western Australia, that I think we have had our share of state and federal leaders who - I do not refer to our current leaders - would make a similar claim.

What benefits will flow from the budget? The budget has been called a brilliant budget and a boomerang budget. In fact, the shadow Treasurer labelled it a boomerang budget because of the money that will be used on expenditure and the money that will return in the form of taxes. For a number of obvious reasons, I will not go down that path this evening. However, I highlight the fact that I call this budget a wait-a-while budget. Unfortunately, Western Australia has been labelled with that name because of its initials. This budget is a classic example of having to wait a while; indeed, one has only to look at some of the cuts. There has been no real significant increase in revenue outlay for agriculture for a number of years. Agriculture has bumped along. Sadly, it is viewed by this government as a second or third-rate industry. I remind the house that agriculture is a \$6 billion industry that employs approximately 190 000 people across the agricultural and food processing sectors. It is our second largest export earner after our mineral exports, which is significant. This state grew and developed and became the state that it is today on the back of agriculture. It is a crying shame that when the Treasurer delivered his seventh budget speech, he did not once mention the word "agriculture". That is an indictment of our second largest industry and earner. Sadly, that seems to have carried through to the allocation of funds for agriculture. Despite the fact that \$16.4 billion has been allocated for revenue expenditure, agriculture and food and forestry and fisheries have received a pitiful two per cent allocation of about \$323 million. That figure does not adequately recognise what the great industry of agriculture contributes to the revenue of Western Australia.

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Sadly, it goes further than that. We have heard a lot from government members yesterday and this evening about the investment the government is making in regional Western Australia. The government is making significant investment in regional Western Australia. However, that investment is not spread across all the regions of Western Australia. It is directed principally at two, three, four or five locations. I refer to Albany, Bunbury, Geraldton, Karratha and Port Hedland. Out beyond those areas, where agriculture functions in the south west and where pastoralism is battling away in the more arid regions, even up into your electorate, Mr Speaker, we see the lack of expenditure and where the benefit of this budget is sadly wanting. There is a lot of proposed expenditure, and that is welcomed and acknowledged and certainly much needed. However, the fact remains that the process will be delayed. Not a great deal is happening this year. Not a lot is being spent this year on agriculture, fisheries and local government in the areas outside the main regional centres. I am not knocking what is being spent in the major regional centres; that warrants a big tick for the government and deserves recognition. However, we must remember that outside those areas is where the real revenue - the export dollars of this state - is being generated; that is, across the farms and the pastoral areas in those more isolated and regional areas. The Minister for Agriculture and Food, for example, has said that \$126 million has been allocated for the relocation of the Department of Agriculture and Food's new research unit headquarters to Murdoch University, and that is great. It is supported by industry and everyone on this side of the house, but it will not happen until about 2011. I understand that we must spread our resources and expenditure across this whole state from one end to the other; there is no question that that must occur. However, people need to be able to follow the reality of what will happen, and that is not evident. We need to acknowledge the fact that agriculture in Western Australia needs some support; it needs some encouragement; and it needs a better investment than what is being offered in this budget.

There are many examples of these delays, and I will highlight a couple of areas. The Muchea saleyards have been long anticipated, yet what was a budgeted project of about \$11 million four or five years ago has gone through the \$18 million estimate, and now we are looking at an estimate in excess of \$30 million. I acknowledge that earthworks started only a week ago; the minister was up there at the time. The sad part about it is that, for whatever reason, there does not seem to be a will or a capacity to press the go button to get some runs on the board so that people in the stock industry can have some surety and understanding that these facilities will be completed. It is anticipated by industry that the revenue earned from the sale of the developed and refurbished Midland saleyards can be fairly and equitably spread across a couple of areas. One would obviously be the Muchea saleyards.

The other issue is the state of the Katanning saleyards. Today I met Shire of Katanning representatives and they left no doubt in my mind about the dire straits that the Katanning saleyards are in, yet the minister seems to be unable or unwilling to make some sort of commitment to provide assistance to the Katanning saleyards and the shire down there to enable the redevelopment of the saleyards. That is not good enough.

Another area of concern that I will touch on is the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Bill, which is currently in the upper house. It contains a number of provisions that have given members on this side of the house some concern. The bill is still in the committee stage in the upper house. The supplementary notice paper lists proposed amendments by the minister that give consideration to the Department of Agriculture and Food becoming an authority. This has come out of left field. I am unsure whether the department will be transformed into an authority or whether a structure under the current department will create an authority for reasons of trading in biotechnology etc. We should have seen in the budget a fair dinkum allocation to biotechnology and research in agriculture. It was not there. It does not appear that it will be there in the future. That is very disappointing.

I now move from agriculture to the fisheries budget. Fisheries never cracks a mention. It is a bit like agriculture except that it is a worse-case example. Sadly, the fishing industry has principally been left to its own resources. There has not been a significant increase in revenue funding to the Department of Fisheries and the fishing industry for many years.

**Mr F.M. Logan:** You've got to be joking! They have got a new building in Hillarys.

**Mr G. SNOOK:** That was a one-off; I acknowledge that.

**Mr F.M. Logan:** It cost millions.

**Mr G. SNOOK:** It was a one-off. That appears to be the way it goes. They get these little squirts now and again.

**Mr F.M. Logan:** It cost millions of dollars.

Mr John Kobelke; Mr Rob Johnson; Acting Speaker; Dr Graham Jacobs; Mr Peter Watson; Mr John McGrath;  
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**Mr G. SNOOK:** Fishing is a half-billion-dollar industry to Western Australia, and that does not include the recreational sector. It is a significant employer and a significant industry.

**Mr F.M. Logan:** Of course it is, but we are talking about the department; we are not talking about the industry.

**Mr G. SNOOK:** Yes, but the department forms an important part of the industry.

**Mr F.M. Logan:** I know, but we are talking about the department in the budget papers.

**Mr G. SNOOK:** That is right. I am trying to draw the parallels in terms of the amount of money that this government invests in management and research in industries such as agriculture and fisheries. It needs to be reflective of the worth they are giving to the state.

**Mr F.M. Logan:** If you go back and look at the amount of money that has been put into fisheries research, you will be very surprised.

**Mr G. SNOOK:** I have looked a lot and there is money invested, there is no question about that. We are looking at the enormous pressures on fish stocks and fish resources. My message to the other side of the house is that if we are to have a chance of ensuring that we can put Western Australian-produced fish on our tables, we need to invest heavily in aquaculture and research in that area. We need a bipartisan approach. I am not saying that it is all the responsibility of the government. We need a serious injection of funds. That parallels with biotechnology and all the rest of it. That is my message. I am acknowledging what work is done, but I am being critical of the fact that additional recognition and investment are needed in the area.

I move on to local government. Local government forms the third tier of government within our democratic system. It is an enormous employer within the state. It is often derided and criticised, sometimes I believe grossly unfairly. There are areas within local government that need addressing concerning compliance and the functioning of some councils. Principally, the core jobs that local government provides and the dollar value of the services it provides would not be as effectively matched at either federal or state level. Local government is closest to the people. Obviously, therein lies some of the issues in terms of the sensitivity of the decisions it makes.

Local government is faced with massive challenges. A number of reports have come out in recent times but none as profound as the Local Government Advisory Board's report to the minister on the sustainability of local government in Western Australia. That report identified 84 councils out of 144 in Western Australia that would not be financially viable into the future. In other words, they were heading for severe financial problems. Local government is very much constrained by the requirements of the new act and the regulations in terms of compliance and reporting to the department. We could look at what local government has taken on in recent years. Apart from the structure of compliance under the Local Government Act and the responsibilities of the CEO in terms of the natural administrative processes, the Fire and Emergency Services Authority levy has been introduced and, more recently, the contaminated sites legislation has been implemented. All the issues that urban councils, in particular, have taken on used to be undertaken by agencies of the state, such as community policing etc.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr G. SNOOK:** On top of that, all the time we hear about the difficulties of finding and keeping police and teachers. Local government is facing exactly the same crisis of retention of staff, whether it involves CEOs, intermediary administration staff or outside staff on the construction gangs.

**Mr R.C. Kucera:** Maybe it's time to start amalgamating some of those councils.

**Mr G. SNOOK:** That is a real challenge that faces us all. I think the Western Australian Local Government Association is going down the track of getting that awareness out. I am sure the member would agree that it is worrying to see that the 15-year forward projections of large city councils such as the City of Swan and the City of Joondalup do not see them in an economically viable situation. That seems almost unbelievable.

**Mr R.C. Kucera:** That is even worse in the smaller councils.

**Mr G. SNOOK:** Exactly. Smaller councils have better opportunities to cut and nip and manage their economies because they can pull right back. They do not have those high demanding -

**Mr R.C. Kucera:** Not when you have these levels of development that are currently occurring that require environmental planning, the kind of urban planning and everything else that is being required, and the calibre of the people who need to do that. It seems to me that councils should be looking at some degree of at least either amalgamating themselves or amalgamating services.

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**Mr G. SNOOK:** There is some merit in what the member is saying. One silver bullet will not fix it. I give the example of the Onkaparinga Shire in the Adelaide hills. It became a large shire after five local authorities around it were amalgamated. It thought that would be its panacea for the financial, administrative and sustainability issues it was faced with. Its 10 or 15-year forward financial projections paint the same sort of picture. It is just not going to be viable. There is something wrong in the process. It has something to do with either compliance or levels of development. This is not a political issue; we are all faced with this dilemma. We need all good heads to come together to work this out. It is a real challenge for Western Australia, not so much in the urban areas as in the rural areas, where small rural communities are so dependent on their shires as the linchpin, the catalyst and the glue that holds their communities together. It is no real excuse to say that nothing but efficiency and utilisation of federal and state grants matters; that is one of the most important criteria we must consider. There is a real issue there, but there is no question that the challenge for us in this place, devoid of politics, is to work through this issue to reach an outcome that will not see small communities disadvantaged to the point of their extinction, loss of businesses and that sort of thing. It is a really tough call.

I believe that the current grants system does not serve local government well. Local government, with its key performance indicators and performance criteria, really needs to be locked in, from a grants point of view, to a growth tax. The goods and services tax comes to mind, but that will be an impossibility, because what state will give up part of its GST? The federal government will say that local government is a creature of the states, and that since the federal government gives the GST back to the states, they should go away and sort it out. That will be a tough nut to crack. The federal government will have to come in on this, because it controls the major tax revenue sources. If not the GST, it must be a percentage of the gross revenue take, which would be a growth tax to be shared amongst local government. It is a challenge that will need to be tackled in a bipartisan way. That is my call, and it is a real challenge for us. However, the mood out there, particularly in rural areas, is changing. There is an acceptance that the problem needs to be discussed, so we have come some way and that is a start. It is incumbent on all of us as members of Parliament to get our minds around this and collectively start to work out how we will tackle this and go forward.

This will come out further during estimates next week, but I notice with interest that the budget shows that almost \$15 million from the Department of Local Government and Regional Development has been allocated to the regional investment fund for grants to local government and not spent. It has been left behind, and I need to find out why that is. I have picked it up, but I do not know what the answer is. I would like to know why \$15 million was allocated and not used.

In the few minutes I have left I would like to touch upon a few items in my electorate, which sits in an interesting part of the state. The electorate of Moore takes in eight shires north of the metropolitan area, running up the coast. It has a diversity of industry, and is growing and facing increased demand for services. I know, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr A.P. O’Gorman), that you are one of the people who would like a free run up Brand Highway with your caravan, or a nice subtle run up the new Indian Ocean Drive.

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** His caravan will be free of stamp duty.

**Mr G. SNOOK:** He will have a bit more money to buy some petrol while he dawdles along behind the road trains on Brand Highway, because a couple of passing lanes that are currently being built will not solve the problem. I would imagine that it would be accepted as a fair criticism that it is extremely disappointing to the electors of Moore, travellers and the people of Geraldton. In 2003, the estimated cost of construction of the road was \$32 million, but a couple of years ago it was \$68 million. I have noticed a figure of \$153 million in the budget papers. That is a sad legacy, and it is a penalty that taxpayers have to pay. Prior to my coming into this place, the seven local authorities from Geraldton right down the coastal strip to Gingin were keen for that project to go ahead. Two shires were willing to contribute their resources and a developer was interested in contributing cash to the construction of the remaining section between Cervantes and Lancelin. It is very sad and disappointing that those opportunities have been lost. The increase in the volume of traffic on Brand Highway has brought it to the point at which it is an extremely dangerous road. Dozens of semitrailers and oil tankers are mixing with other traffic. You would have seen them and been challenged by them often, Mr Acting Speaker. God forbid, but let us hope that between now and when Indian Ocean Drive is opened, we do not have a multiple fatality on the road. A lot of anger has been caused as a result of that \$45 million disappearing from the budget. However, the construction of the road is starting. An allocation has been made and a contract has been let, but it will be a road to nowhere, so the government really needs to lift its game.

We really need to see the return of the infill sewerage program, particularly in rural areas, but it is not in the budget. There are serious problems in regional areas. Disappointingly, the infill sewerage program has been reduced substantially in those areas since this government came to power. I have urged the minister - I am happy to see him in the chamber listening - to increase the funding for that program and build it back up so that

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some of those pressure spots and trouble spots throughout the wheatbelt can be addressed. Some of those areas are desperately crying out for infill sewerage, not only for health reasons. If we are to provide investment and opportunities in rural and regional areas, people need to be able to hook up to a sewerage system. It is probably one of the main inhibiting factors to land releases. I understand the difficulty that the government is faced with, but I will keep chipping away at and highlighting those problems. The costs are enormous. The Shire of Carnamah had an effluent disposal site and it was pumping out septic tanks at a reasonable price. Now that site has been condemned. The shire is facing unbudgeted costs and the community is faced with horrendous bills to transport that effluent to water authority sites for disposal.

**Mr J.C. Kobelke:** Can you say briefly why it was condemned?

**Mr G. SNOOK:** The shire was planning to do some works on the site, but they were not up to standard. It is a standards problem that it is faced with. I have written to the minister about the issue. He needs to consider increasing the funding in some key areas to overcome the problems.

What is really missing from this budget are some dollars for remote and regional parts of rural Western Australia, which are the energy and the economic drivers that got this state to where it was prior to the resources boom, and the government needs to get those areas going again.

**MR M.P. WHITELY (Bassendean - Parliamentary Secretary) [9.30 pm]:** In speaking on the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Bills, I will be making some comments about how the budget affects my electorate. Before I do that, however, I would like to indulge myself and make my twenty-ninth speech in this place on my favourite topic, ADHD, or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. This is my first speech on ADHD for 2007. The member for Peel is probably the only member of this place who has not experienced one of my speeches on this topic, about which I have become somewhat obsessed. I ask members to forgive me if I sound a bit triumphant in this speech, but I am very encouraged about some progress that has been made on this issue on a national basis. A lot has happened in 2007. One of the most significant things that has happened in 2007 has been the intervention by the Prime Minister, John Howard, in recent weeks. The catalyst for that intervention, and for the vigorous debate that has taken place about ADHD recently, was the comments of Judge Paul Conlon from the New South Wales District Court. An article published in the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* on 26 April 2007 states -

Judge Paul Conlon has slammed doctors for creating a generation of Ritalin kids now committing violent crimes and coming before the courts.

The article quotes Justice Conlon as saying -

“I have huge concerns. The tide of cases is amazing . . .

“I am starting to lose count of [the number of] offenders coming before the courts who were diagnosed at a very young age with ADHD for which they were ‘medicated’”.

. . .

Judge Conlon said he was also seeing signs that children prescribed psycho-stimulant drugs like Ritalin went on to develop addiction to drugs like methamphetamines.

“My own research indicates that ADHD is perhaps the most over-diagnosed condition in today’s society,” . . .

. . .

He urged health professionals whom he knew had concerns to become more vocal . . .

All power to Judge Conlon for making those comments. That is what I have been saying for the better part of 12 years. It is fair to say that the tide has turned in favour of the view expressed by not only me, but also Judge Conlon. It is no longer the view of a tiny minority; it is a powerful and emerging majority view.

The comments by Judge Conlon were the catalyst for a very vigorous debate in the eastern states, some of which spilt over to Western Australia. Most notably, Nicola Roxon, the federal shadow spokesperson for health, has called upon the Howard government to hold a national inquiry into ADHD. That call is in response to the clear concern that Australia has one of the world’s highest rates of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and one of the world’s highest rates for the prescribing of drugs for that condition. Nicola Roxon singled out the Western Australian Parliament’s inquiry into ADHD for special praise, and said that it outlined the pathway that we should be following. I was both encouraged and dismayed by the Prime Minister’s response. I was encouraged, because he actually said that he, too, was worried about the over-prescription of powerful stimulants, and he left open the possibility of an inquiry. I welcome those comments.

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 16 May 2007]

p2274b-2311a

Mr John Kobelke; Mr Rob Johnson; Acting Speaker; Dr Graham Jacobs; Mr Peter Watson; Mr John McGrath; Speaker; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Gary Snook; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Grant Woodhams; Mr Mick Murray

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However, I was dismayed by the ignorance that the Prime Minister displayed when he talked about some of the possible solutions, and about how his government's response is appropriate and headed in the right direction. The Prime Minister said that the listing of the new drug Strattera on the pharmaceutical benefits scheme from 1 June - that is wrong; it is actually from 1 July, I believe - is part of the solution, because, unlike Ritalin and other current ADHD drugs, Strattera is not a stimulant. He is right. It is not a stimulant. However, it is the only ADHD drug to carry a black box warning. That is the highest possible level of warning. It carries that warning for suicide ideation. It also carries warnings for potential fatal liver damage, and a bunch of other serious adverse side effects. Strattera is a failed antidepressant that has been re-badged and remarketed as an ADHD drug. I am aware that attempts have been made to gain access to the results of the trials of Strattera as an antidepressant. However, I believe the manufacturer is not putting out those results because they contain some sort of commercial-in-confidence information. I am sure that detail is alarming; the manufacturer would have released those results if it had nothing to hide.

It is good that John Howard is getting involved in this debate. However, frankly, that first step that he is taking is incorrect. The federal government has no excuse for not knowing about these concerns about Strattera, because not only I, but also the Western Australian Minister for Health and the Australian Childhood Foundation, wrote to Health Minister Abbott to outline these concerns. The Australian Childhood Foundation wrote to Abbott and asked him not only to not put Strattera on the pharmaceutical benefits scheme when it was recommended by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee, but also to take the extraordinary step of banning this drug because the foundation was so concerned about it. I have seen the letter from Dr Joe Tucci, the chief executive officer of the Australian Childhood Foundation. Abbott did not do me the courtesy of writing a personal reply. It was a non-political letter that simply pointed out concerns about this drug. I do not believe that Dr Joe Tucci of the Australian Childhood Foundation received a reply before Abbott decided to approve the drug for the PBS. It is a potential disaster. The commonwealth government has dedicated \$101.2 million over the next four years to subsidise this drug, which, frankly, makes children, in a small but significant number of cases, want to commit suicide. We have already had reports of the Therapeutic Goods Administration about a 12-year-old girl ripping out her fingernails and toenails. We have had reports about a seven-year-old girl trying to jump from a moving car. Yet, without addressing the very real concerns raised by me and by the Australian Childhood Foundation, the federal government has jumped straight in and subsidised this drug.

What concerns me most is the rationale for subsidising this drug and how far off the mark the commonwealth government has gone. The amount over four years is \$101.2 million. In the first year, it is supposed to be the subsidy for Strattera for 18 000 people. Eighteen thousand people are probably about 18 or 20 per cent of the total number of people on attention deficit hyperactivity disorder medications in Australia. Strattera is being subsidised as a second-line treatment for those who cannot tolerate stimulants - basically, those who cannot tolerate amphetamines; namely, dexamphetamine and Ritalin and all the derivatives of Ritalin. It is for those who do not tolerate them well and who experience the common and very serious side effects of Ritalin. Strattera is supposed to be a second line of treatment, but, of course, the federal government is completely ignorant of the fact that it is a schedule 4 drug. Those other drugs are schedule 8 drugs; they are controlled substances and are subject to very tight controls. The former WA health minister put in place some fantastic accountability measures that have led to a significant decline in drugging rates in Western Australia. I will talk a bit more about the actual figures in a minute. However, those sorts of accountability measures do not apply to schedule 4 drugs. Schedule 8 drugs, the amphetamines that are currently prescribed for ADHD, can be prescribed only by psychiatrists and paediatricians. Only child psychiatrists and paediatricians can prescribe them for children. However, schedule 4 drugs can be prescribed by general practitioners. Therefore, the danger is that there will be an absolute explosion in ADHD medication rates, with a drug that has a black box warning for suicidal ideation, and we already have evidence of children attempting suicide in Australia.

It will be a disaster if this decision is not reversed. It will be a disaster because it will not be a second line of treatment; it will be a first line of treatment for some of those sloppy practitioners who currently prescribe and who want to get around the accountability measures. It will be a first-line treatment for them. However, of even greater concern is that it will become the only option available to GPs who become enthusiastic prescribers. Therefore, instead of having a handful of rogue prescribers, or probably two handfuls in Western Australia, although I am pleased to say that the number is decreasing, there will potentially be tens and quite possibly even hundreds of rogue prescribers in states such as New South Wales. This will exacerbate the problem. The Howard government needs to wake up to this immediately, rather than pissing \$101.2 million down the drain and sponsoring drugs that will lead only to an explosion in ADHD drugging. It is a potential disaster.

To put it in context, the stimulant monitoring measures that were put in place by our government and the former health minister, the member for Yokine, will be avoided. Using official health department statistics, it is interesting to look at the impact of those accountability measures that were put in place in September 2003.



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Whilst these figures were not collected on the same basis, the official WA Department of Health estimate of the number of children on ADHD medication in 2002 was about 17 500. After the introduction of the stimulant monitoring regime, which is a new scheme that was put in place by the former Minister for Health, that rate was more than halved and was reduced to 8 057 children. Those measures had a great effect. However, those measures will be bypassed with the subsidisation of Strattera. Because Strattera is not a stimulant, it will not be subject to the same accountability measures. It is an enormous concern that all that good work that has been done will be unravelled. We will potentially have many more careless prescribers. I am enormously concerned about that.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.P. O’Gorman):** I remind the member to keep his words to a parliamentary standard.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** I thank you, Mr Acting Speaker; I will endeavour to do that. It is a pity that the federal government tends to dispose of taxpayers’ money in such a reckless manner.

The second element of the Prime Minister’s response that worried me was that he told *The Daily Telegraph* on 27 April that he was awaiting the outcome of a government-funded review of clinical guidelines for the diagnosis and appropriate treatment of ADHD by the Royal Australasian College of Physicians. That sounds very fine and dandy. On 2 May Tony Abbott repeated the fact that a national inquiry into the use of medication to treat attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder was already underway and should be completed later this year. They both had faith in the National Health and Medical Research Council’s ADHD guidelines committee delivering an appropriate response to the issue. As I said, I might be a little triumphant but I happened to get on to *The Daily Telegraph* and point out that the chair of the committee, Dr Daryl Efron, was on the advisory boards of Novartis and Eli Lilly. Novartis is the manufacturer of Ritalin and Eli Lilly is the manufacturer of Strattera. Dr Efron has history of being a very pro-ADHD drug advocate. That was a huge concern. On 30 April that article was published in *The Daily Telegraph* and revealed that Dr Efron sat on those two boards. In response, Dr Efron said that the most important thing was that the committee members declare their potential conflicts of interest. When the communications director of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, Gary Disher, who is also on the committee, was approached to comment on Dr Efron’s other work, he asked, “Is that right?” He said -

We have asked for a disclosure for everybody who is on the working group and I haven’t managed to catch up with all of that.

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians was unaware that Dr Efron was on the advisory boards of those two drug companies.

**Mr R.C. Kucera:** That is scandalous.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** It is. However, the good news, which is why I am feeling slightly triumphant, is that on 5 May *The Daily Telegraph* published an article headed “ADHD head quits - linked to drug firms”. I am proud to say that it is me who exposed his link to those drug firms and I am proud to say that he has gone as the chair. Tony Abbott said that it was “not a good look”. He then said that he had faith in Dr Efron’s impartiality. However, if members read the subtext, they will infer that - I hazard to guess - Tony Abbot encouraged Dr Efron to resign. Tony Abbott also said that he “instinctively questioned” the long-term use of drugs for non-life threatening conditions. He does not have to instinctively question it. He could read the letter that I sent him or the letter that the Western Australian Minister for Health sent him, or he could read the very powerful plea from the Australian Childhood Foundation on behalf of Australian children that was sent to him by its CEO, Joe Tucci, and he could have read that before he put Strattera on the pharmaceutical benefits scheme.

I am pleased to say that the new chairman of the attention deficit hyperactivity disorder guidelines committee is a Western Australian. He is a paediatrician. He is Associate Professor David Forbes from the University of Western Australia. I have heard that he is not a specialist in children’s mental health issues. To my knowledge he is a very rare prescriber, if at all, but I do not know that for sure; I am going only on second-hand comments. Certainly, the feedback I have had about him is that he is a very capable doctor and displays a great deal of commonsense. I only hope that he can come to terms with this issue.

However, one thing I fear is the fact that Dr Efron is still on this committee. He should have gone. He should have resigned, not just as the head of the committee but also as a member of the committee. He has a clear conflict of interest. He has a clear predisposition to supporting the drugging of children. He is one of the high-profile clinicians around Australia who has argued for the use of Ritalin outside the manufacturer’s own guidelines on children less than six years of age. This guy should be off the committee. If he is left on the committee, it will be automatically tainted.

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 16 May 2007]

p2274b-2311a

Mr John Kobelke; Mr Rob Johnson; Acting Speaker; Dr Graham Jacobs; Mr Peter Watson; Mr John McGrath; Speaker; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Gary Snook; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Grant Woodhams; Mr Mick Murray

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I also have some instincts that the reluctance of the relevant federal authorities to reveal who else is on the committee so that I can discover whether they have drug company connections makes me extremely alarmed. I would bet London to a brick that others on that committee have very close and cosy relationships with drug companies. I cannot examine them because I cannot find out at the moment who is on the committee. However, people are working on that and when we find out, frankly, we will make sure that this committee is impartial and fair; otherwise, its work will be discredited. The NHMRC actually has a history of this. Under the National Health and Medical Research Council, the task of the current committee is to review the guidelines that were put in place by the National Health and Medical Research Council advisory committee in 1997. I have actually written a bit of an academic paper on it. I will not bore members with the content of the academic paper; however, that committee was stacked with paediatricians and child psychiatrists who have a clear bias towards the diagnosis and use of medication for ADHD.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** I therefore have a concern with the make-up of the current committee. I will reflect only on history because the previous 1997 NHMRC committee was stacked with names that I am familiar with, after 12 years of educating myself on this issue. It comprised a number of people who were prone to sloppy diagnosis and were pro the indiscriminate use of stimulant medication as shown by the work that was done by the committee back in 1997. One of the things that concerned me - I will not refer to them in great detail - was that the committee quite clearly came to the conclusion that the use of stimulant medication should be considered for treatment of most children with ADHD. It then went on to extol the benefits of amphetamines - it did not have the honesty to call them amphetamines; it called them medication - for adjusting the behaviour of children, but it did not go on to spell out the fact that amphetamines have an almost universal effect on anybody who takes them of tightening focus and narrowing focus. It sold that old furphy by saying we should look at the way children have responded and look at the way their behaviour has been changed, but it did not point out the fact that these are the behaviour-altering drugs that can alter the behaviour of virtually anybody. The committee went on to look at diagnostic criteria. It talked about ICD 10, the World Health Organization approach, which involved far more conservative diagnostic practices and it talked about DSM-IV and the far sloppier American Psychiatric Association approach. It talked about the two different approaches and then, without rationale, it went on to conclude that the American Psychiatric Association approach, the sloppier, looser approach, was the approach we should take. It then went on to argue that clinicians should not even feel restricted by that, and that if they think that it is appropriate to drug beyond the guidelines of the very sloppy DSM-IV criteria, they should go ahead.

One of the statements in the 1997 report that concerned me greatly was that the "use of medication outside officially listed indications and drug evaluation mechanisms is proper if it complies with reasonable theory, expert practice or controlled scientific studies". The words that really alarm me are "reasonable theory". Basically, it means that if someone is an experienced practitioner and can come up with a reasonable theory, which typically is that a child, without any confirming evidence, has a biochemical brain imbalance, he or she can be given amphetamines. That is "reasonable theory" and it goes no further than that.

The National Health and Medical Research Council has this aura of credibility about it; however, in the past it has been loaded with people of a particular mindset who have come up with a set of conclusions that suit their mindset, and frankly, suit the purposes of the drug companies, which are in the business of maximising profits by selling their products as widely as possible. I am concerned that we are seeing a similar process. The only evidence we have about the make-up of the current committee - I know one or two other names on the committee but I am not going to break confidences and reveal them, but they concern me - is that the former chairperson, who has just been forced to resign, did so because of a clear conflict of interest. It seems to me we are heading down the same path we headed down in 1997. I have had a look at the terms of reference under which the guidelines are supposed to be developed and they smack of the same. I have been in this game long enough to suspect exactly where this inquiry is going if it follows those terms of reference. I have a huge concern that we will see a confirmation of those same sloppy 1997 diagnostic criteria and the same loosening of guidelines for the use of medications. Coupled with the fact that Strattera will now, as a schedule 4 drug, be available to a wider range of potential sloppy prescribers, we will see a second-round explosion in ADHD drugging rates if this problem is not addressed.

However, I do not think it is going to happen because we have seen a fundamental change in this debate. As I said, I do not think my view is now considered as radical or extreme. It is actually becoming a mainstream view. We see very credible people such as Dr John Jureidini in South Australia, Gill Anaf in South Australia, George Halasz in Victoria and a number of other clinicians around Australia, and many in Western Australia - I will not name them because they would probably rather I did not - who are expressing commonsense views and caution.

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They are saying that if drugs have to be used, they should be a treatment of last resort and only in extreme cases. There is a groundswell of public opinion and support and even the right sentiments, so to speak, coming from the Prime Minister and the federal Minister for Health and Ageing. If they can back those sentiments with some intellect and some facts, I am confident we will be able to prevent all of this happening. I am quite excited and pleased by the way the debate is going and I think we will see the right sorts of things happening.

I want to use the remaining time to talk about the budget and to praise the Treasurer for delivering yet another great Labor budget. I particularly want to praise him for the stamp duty initiatives for first home buyers. In my electorate, suburbs such as Bennett Springs and to a lesser extent the established suburbs of Beechboro, Lockridge, Bassendean, Eden Hill, Ashfield and Caversham are typical of the sorts of areas in which first home buyers will buy.

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** I am already warming to the replacement of that school you mentioned!

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** Yes. At a global level, I am pleased with the outcomes of the budget. The deliberate targeting of first home buyers to give them an advantage in the marketplace - if they are buying a half-million dollar house, they will have effectively a \$20 000 price advantage over investors - is fantastic. In addition, not having generalised stamp duty cuts will prevent the inflationary effect that would have necessarily come about had the budget involved a generalised decrease in stamp duty. Well done, Treasurer! That measure is well targeted and of great value to the many potential first home buyers who either live in my electorate or will seek to buy in my electorate. I am very pleased with that measure.

I am pleased with other elements of the budget. However, I must express some concern about an issue that I expressed concern about last year. I am sorry, Treasurer, but I have to do this. I am still a little confused about whether the project could be funded in the near future before the next budget round. I am disappointed that the budget contains no specific funding for the principal shared path from Bayswater to Bassendean. Frankly, I expected it in this year's budget, because I was given encouragement from a number of sources in government. If I am honest, I expected it last year, too. That project is dear to the heart of many of my constituents. Bassendean is about nine kilometres from the central business district. The stretch from Bayswater train station to Bassendean train station is perfect for an extension of the commuter cycling network. If one asked what could be the most effective and well used section of the Perth bicycle network, it could be that section. People mostly cycle commute where there is a direct route and where the terrain is flat. The section from Bassendean to Perth meets both those criteria. At a time when we are encouraging people to exercise and cycle more to tackle obesity and greenhouse gas emissions from motor vehicles, the benefits of extending the principal shared path to Bassendean would be enormous. I am not completely without hope that I will see movement in that direction. I was disappointed that the principal shared path was not identified specifically in this year's budget and I expect that many of my constituents will also be disappointed. I expect that some of my constituents will be disappointed and angry with me for not being able to deliver, and that is why I am translating those sentiments up the chain. I want the principal shared path extended now, as do my constituents.

Having said all that, it is a great budget. The benefits for those who live in Labor electorates and the benefits for the many people who do not have the equity to get into the home market are enormous. The benefits for the many people who rent - I refer to indirect benefits through the lower rental price pressure that will result from land tax cuts - will be very welcome and of great advantage to people in my electorate.

In the time that remains, I will talk about a couple of items that I did not expect to be in the budget because they are too small to be registered in the budget as a single item. I have identified the fact that Lockridge Primary School must be rebuilt. Having been built in the late 1960s or early 1970s, it was not built that long ago in historical terms. However, it was built badly and on the cheap. It is very tired looking and in need of replacement. The school is situated on a beautiful site that has excess capacity, which provides the opportunity to rebuild it in a staged manner. I will actively work with the Minister for Education and Training to progress that issue.

I am encouraged by what is happening at the Pyrton site. Again, this was not in the budget, but I am grateful that the Minister for Housing and Works managed to find \$2.5 million from her budget to fund the early demolition of the derelict buildings on the Pyrton site. Demolition is underway. I am working with the Indigenous Land Corporation and others in a way that I have made public in my electorate to ensure a great future for that site. I am also looking forward to the opening up of the river foreshore, particularly between Point Reserve and Guildford Bridge. That will be a great asset to the people of Bassendean. It will give them somewhere to go for an evening or morning stroll rather than simply having to end their journey at Point Reserve. All these things are coming; and all these things are great. It is a great budget, with that one reservation.

Mr John Kobelke; Mr Rob Johnson; Acting Speaker; Dr Graham Jacobs; Mr Peter Watson; Mr John McGrath; Speaker; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Gary Snook; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Grant Woodhams; Mr Mick Murray

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**MR M.J. COWPER (Murray)** [9.59 pm]: I would like to speak on behalf of my electorate of Murray, the fourth oldest municipality in Western Australia, the main town of which, Pinjarra, was established in 1834. That was obviously done when Thomas Peel took up landholdings in that area; hence the name Peel region. Every year since the very first member of Parliament represented the Murray area in 1838, a budget has come down, and for the time I have been a member of Parliament, it has been almost like groundhog day. The following press release to my local paper will be headed "Budget fails Murray again", and will state -

The 2007/08 State Budget announced by Treasurer Eric Ripper left the Murray electorate with no significant or new projects or outcomes in areas such as education, health, policing, road infrastructure, recreation and land tax relief.

The one reservation is the Perth-Bunbury highway, which dissects my electorate. It is more a state infrastructure than a local project, although it will benefit all the people in the south west land division. I am referring to an important road infrastructure; namely, the Pinjarra bypass. Last year when I had an opportunity to travel with the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee, we called into Pinjarra and I availed some of my parliamentary colleagues of the finery of the Steam Train Cafe. You may have even been there, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr A.P. O’Gorman) - or perhaps not. We were at that cafe in the main street of Pinjarra when the heavy traffic was noticed that goes through the town of Pinjarra on an all too frequent occasion. With the opening of the Boddington goldmine just over the hill from Dwellingup, an additional amount of pressure will be put on that road. For some time, there have been plans to build a bypass around Pinjarra to link South Western Highway not only to the east of the town but also back around to link up with the new Perth-Bunbury highway via Greenlands Road. Nothing in this budget has been set aside for it. I understand that a federal announcement may be made. Let us hope that our federal colleagues will come to the party and bring some money to the table to enable that very important infrastructure to come to fruition for people in my electorate and those further south.

There is no funding allocated for new government schools in my electorate. We hear from time to time about all the new schools being built. Every time I have an opportunity, I will raise the fact that we have no new government schools in the Murray electorate. There are two areas of grave concern to me; land is being set aside for them but no budget allocation has been made for a single school, although it is one of the faster growing areas in Western Australia. Not far from where I live are the fast-growing areas of Meadow Springs, Madora Bay, San Remo and Lakelands. In the not-too-distant future, something in the vicinity of 1 184 primary schoolchildren aged between six and 12 years will be residing in that area. People who live in Meadow Springs must cross the busy Fremantle and Gordon Roads to reach the North Mandurah Primary School. Alternatively, children in Madora Bay travel to Singleton, in the Rockingham shire, to go to school. There is nothing in the budget for a new school in that very strategic fast-growing area of the northern part of Mandurah. The other area of major concern is Ravenswood, the fast-growing area on the northern banks of the Murray River. A development plan has been outlined for an additional 19 000 homes to be built on a greenfields site, I understand, to the east of the new Perth-Bunbury Highway. There is also a new development at South Yunderup, including a 2 500-site development. In addition, there is a five-acre development further up on the Keilman property, just off Lakes Road. It will all bring additional infrastructure requirements to that part of the world. Unfortunately, there is no forward planning for the anticipated growth. I know that frequent requests by the City of Mandurah and the Shire of Murray for such forward planning is falling on deaf ears. I understand that the government will be visiting the Shire of Murray in the next few weeks. I hereby offer an invitation to raise some significant points with the government. I will touch upon them as we go. One is the issue of a school site in that facility, which is very important.

We already know the impact this has had on school buses and their ability to travel from precincts in the Shire of Murray to Pinjarra Senior High School and Pinjarra Primary School. An inordinate number of buses are required. I may stand corrected, but Pinjarra Senior High School, Pinjarra Primary School and St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School have something in the vicinity of 1 600 children attending those schools. The vast majority of those children come from outside the town site of Pinjarra. They come from South Yunderup, North Yunderup, Barragup, Furnissdale, North Dandalup, Dwellingup and Waroona. The point I am trying to make is that it is not like some other conventional town in which the population is centred in the main part of the town. The vast majority of the population of the Shire of Murray is located on the western extremities of the landholdings along the edges of the Murray and Serpentine Rivers. It is unique in many respects. That is why we are now confronted with the problems of a vastly encroaching urban sprawl that is coming further south into the Peel region. We have seen some rather perplexing decisions to extend metropolitan bus boundaries and Transperth areas that are contrary to Department of Education and Training boundary lines. We are seeing real problems for parents trying to get their kids to and from school.

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 16 May 2007]

p2274b-2311a

Mr John Kobelke; Mr Rob Johnson; Acting Speaker; Dr Graham Jacobs; Mr Peter Watson; Mr John McGrath; Speaker; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Gary Snook; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Grant Woodhams; Mr Mick Murray

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There is no funding for the north Mandurah access road. Members might ask what is the north Mandurah access road. It is the road required to link the new Perth-Bunbury highway to Mandurah. It will come in on a line similar to the new Perth-Mandurah railway line. The importance of that is that, as it stands, all access onto the freeway from Mandurah by the 47 000-odd people who live there is by way of only three routes: Pinjarra Road, Lakes Road via Gordon Road and Pagononi Road, which is actually in the member for Peel's electorate. Significant pressure will be put on the three access points going onto the highway. We will see the intersections at Gordon and Fremantle Roads fail. I have raised this issue before; possibly in the same respective speech last year. There is no funding and no plans to stump up for that addition. At the moment it is a situation within the City of Mandurah about which the residents are not fully focused on its consequences - yet. It is because the completion of the Perth-Bunbury highway seems a while off. We are told it will be here by 2009. I suggest it will become a particularly important election issue. People will start to realise the importance and the dangers that it poses, particularly to the main educational precinct in the Mandurah region.

Although there is stamp duty relief for first home buyers and investors, there is nothing for people in my electorate. There is no new funding for the Murray District Hospital. During the last election there was an issue that we thought particularly important. It was to build a new hospital in the Shire of Murray because of its rapid expansion. The Murray District Hospital has a very proud history and is integral to the community of the Murray Shire. It has to be returned to its former glory.

We have already heard about some of the developments I mentioned. Virtually the whole eastern side of the Harvey estuary, formerly a pastoral area, mostly used for beef production, is prime land. It has been snapped up by developers left, right and centre of the road. Members may have heard of the Point Grey development that was owned by the Plunkett family. It recently sold for \$92 million. It is possibly the best bit of real estate in the Peel region, bar none, with almost 270-degree panoramic views of the beautiful waterways of the Harvey and Peel inlets. All the land to the east of the Harvey estuary is prime development sites for the future, accessible by the new Perth-Bunbury highway. It will need services and infrastructure. Unless we have some forward planning and proper strategic planning for that area, we will be found wanting and the capacity of the local shires to accommodate that needed infrastructure will be limited.

Members may be aware of the significant impact of last summer's wildfires on Dwellingup, in particular, and Coolup. The community has rallied very well. I take this opportunity to thank the volunteers in my electorate and those who came from as far north as Waggrakine in the Geraldton region and as far south as Kalgan in the Albany region. Units attended from Bornholm, Williams Bay, Denmark and everywhere in between right throughout the south west. From memory, 160-odd units attended during that period of great need. I thank all those volunteers who participated.

As a result of those fires, I had the opportunity to take a first-hand look at the ability of communities to respond in times of need. The Coolup Fire Station, a volunteer bush fire brigade station, is one of the best fire stations we would see anywhere. The problem is that it does not have a water supply other than a bore. Water is pumped out of the bore to a header tank. It is relied upon to supply a considerable amount of water. When the pressure was on during that fire, that tank struggled to keep pace with the demand for water. Yet just down the road, through Coolup, is the Harvey to Perth pipeline. I ask the minister again, despite the correspondence I sent him, to tap into that water pipeline to accommodate the people of Coolup when there are bushfires. We had to rely on pumping water from dams. The time taken to scout around for pumping equipment to reload our tanks was critical.

I invite the minister, if he so wishes, to visit the Dwellingup Fire Station. It is in desperate need of an injection of funds. Fire captain Tim Birmingham is desperate to see its resources added to. Why would it not be considered, given the history of fire in that particular part of the world? Whilst we are talking about Dwellingup, I want to touch on the fact that not enough prescribed burning occurs in our state forests. There are areas of forest adjacent to the town of Dwellingup that have not been burnt for more than 30 years. It was sheer luck that the wind did not change and set alight that old portion of the forest and devastate the town of Dwellingup again. The threat still remains, notwithstanding the fact that something like 17 000 or 18 000 hectares of land was burnt out this year. The portions of land in the south and south east of Dwellingup remain in a dangerous situation. We need a program for reducing fire hazards, not just in Dwellingup but throughout the whole Darling scarp and the whole forest area. I understand that people in the city are concerned about smoke inhalation or smoke allergies. That also relates to the manner in which these prescribed burns are conducted. They could be done in smaller batches when the conditions are favourable. The targets for prescribed burning are not being met, and that creates the potential for loss of life in the future.

[Member's time extended.]

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 16 May 2007]

p2274b-2311a

Mr John Kobelke; Mr Rob Johnson; Acting Speaker; Dr Graham Jacobs; Mr Peter Watson; Mr John McGrath; Speaker; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Gary Snook; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Grant Woodhams; Mr Mick Murray

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**Mr M.J. COWPER:** During that fire, the Hotham Valley railway line was severely damaged. I have been told anecdotally that the damage bill is in the vicinity of \$2 million. I hope that when the cabinet meets in the Murray district next week or the week after, it brings its chequebook. Nothing in the budget papers indicates any commitment to the Hotham Valley railway. I hope the Premier does a desalination plant on us, and surprises us with an extra couple of million dollars for the Hotham Valley railway, which is a vital part of the tourism industry in that area, for both Pinjarra and Dwellingup. The good news is that we have had a bit of rain down there, and everything is starting to regenerate. Things are returning to normal, but, unfortunately, that very vital stretch of railway line is still in disrepair.

The Peel region needs an aquatic centre, particularly in the Shire of Murray. Mandurah is the only regional city in Western Australia that does not have an indoor 50-metre pool. I might stand corrected; I am not sure whether Albany has one.

**Mr P.B. Watson:** Don't mention that; no, we don't.

**Mr M.J. COWPER:** The largest regional city in Western Australia does not have a 50-metre indoor pool. The 2003 sports facilities plan made 27 recommendations, and the first was for a new aquatic centre in the Murray district. I see that as being vital. At the moment there is a swimming centre in Mandurah that was built in about 1982 for a population of 18 000 people. It is a 25-metre pool that is well and truly showing its age. It is in a state of disrepair. The amount of money needed to fix it is hardly worthwhile spending; the facility is almost past its use-by date. It receives some 450 000 visitors per annum, or about 1 300 or 1 400 a day. Can anyone imagine 1 400 people in a backyard swimming pool? The demands on the pool are way outside its capability. An aquatic centre is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of our people.

**Mr R.C. Kucera:** Wasn't that dependent on getting an agreement between the two shires down there?

**Mr M.J. COWPER:** There are no problems with an agreement, but neither of the local governments has the capacity to go ahead. The City of Mandurah, as I understand, has significant problems with capital, given that it is trying to invest as much money as it can in other areas. The Shire of Murray has a ratepayer base of only about 7 500, and it does not have a large enough capacity to afford it. By combining the resources of the two local governments and signing a memorandum of understanding, which I believe is achievable, the recurrent costs of maintaining that facility could be met.

We all have our own little pet projects. I am the proud patron of the Pinjarra Trotting Club. The club has a proud history. It was given the opportunity of operating on Mondays, when no other club wanted to operate on Mondays. It took the opportunity, and it has done very well. Approximately \$1.3 million is negotiated through the TAB on a Monday at Pinjarra Park. This contributes to the overall money pool that is available to Racing and Wagering Western Australia, which has allocated in the vicinity of \$24 million over a three-year period to upgrade facilities, particularly in regional Western Australia. Unfortunately, once again, the Pinjarra Trotting Club has missed out. I am grateful that the Pinjarra Race Club has been allocated some money to upgrade its track. I was grateful to join the minister at the opening of the new greyhound track in Mandurah. The trotting club appears to be the poor cousin of racing and chasing in Western Australia. The buildings that are currently there were transported from Gloucester Park back in the 1960s and the section to the north of the main building was transported from the old Richmond raceway about 13 or 14 years ago. Those buildings were second-hand when we got them. Given that the new highway from Perth is underway and the area is rapidly expanding, I can foresee the Pinjarra club becoming the principal trotting club in Western Australia. Fred Kersley, the renowned horse trainer and reinsman, agrees. The Pinjarra Trotting Club has the best surface. It is a 1 000-metre track and it has the best camber, which provides an opportunity for great pacing. Unfortunately, the facilities do not stack up. To attract good purses for racing, facilities need to be provided to the sponsors. When there are no facilities, the sponsors do not come, so it is a bit of a catch-22 situation. The best we can offer at the moment is a picnic on the grass, which is hardly the standard one would expect these days. Next year I will look very eagerly at whether the trotting club gets any cut of the pie.

The shortage of industrial land in the Murray district is hindering employment. The budget papers indicate that the expansion of the Pinjarra industrial area is about to commence. That is good only for the short to medium term. The real need in the area is for a major industrial area. I noted in the budget papers that a small amount of money was allocated for some sort of study for the new Nambeelup estate. The Nambeelup estate is needed now. I know of one business in the area that has contracts pending to the tune of \$11 billion-odd - not \$11 million. That puts it up there equal to maybe Alcoa. The potential spin-offs from such a business would be significant to the area. If we are not in a position to take advantage of securing those businesses in the Peel region, we will lose them not to somewhere else in Western Australia, but potentially overseas. I understand that the people who are looking at building this significant piece of industry in our area and creating real jobs for a long period are looking at Malaysia and elsewhere. I would hate to think that an Australian idea, Australian

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Mr John Kobelke; Mr Rob Johnson; Acting Speaker; Dr Graham Jacobs; Mr Peter Watson; Mr John McGrath; Speaker; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Gary Snook; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Grant Woodhams; Mr Mick Murray

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technology and Australian people will again lose because we are not in a position to grasp the opportunities that are presented. The employment spin-off would mean that further education and TAFE facilities would be required.

The whole concept of society in the area is very encouraging. I feel very excited about the future for the people in my electorate, but, unfortunately, we are not keeping pace with the requirements for infrastructure. Why is that? I am of the view that it is fantastic that the Treasurer paid cash last year for a train set to Mandurah, which has been very well received. He is retiring debt and I can understand the reason for retiring debt; it saves on interest. I can also see the virtues of the brand-new \$1.12 billion Fiona Stanley Hospital. Yesterday's announcement indicated that another \$1 billion desalination plant will be built in the south west. That is another very important piece of infrastructure. However, the problem with these big-ticket items is that they take a whole lot of oxygen out of the air for everything else that is required in the state. It was interesting to listen to the member for Bassendean say that he wants a footpath. He cannot even get a footpath in his electorate, which is interesting. There is little hope that my friend the member for Moore will get Indian Ocean Drive finished. That is probably the reason I cannot get hospitals built in my electorate. There is probably some infrastructure that the member for Wanneroo, the Deputy Speaker, would like in her electorate, but the fact remains that there is only a certain amount of coin. At least the member for Peel will get the new Comet Bay school in his electorate. Obviously, other areas of spending will need to be forgone to accommodate the big-ticket items that this government thinks are so important, so that when it comes to election time, the government can say that it has built this fantastic iconic rail set, and this fantastic new hospital. However, that is at the expense particularly of regional Western Australia.

**Mr G. Snook:** Which generates the export dollars.

**Mr M.J. COWPER:** That is precisely my point. The Treasurer comes into this house and says, "Great news! Western Australia has a supercharged, turbocharged economy. Western Australia has 10 per cent of the population of Australia, and it produces 34 per cent of Australia's exports. Fantastic!" The problem is that the majority of those exports come from regional Western Australia. That includes the Murray electorate. The world's largest alumina refinery is in the Murray electorate. Are the people of the Murray electorate getting their piece of the pie? No. Nothing in this budget gives the people of the Murray electorate anything to pin their hopes on. What we are confronted with is the blow outs on these projects. The cost of the Perth-Bunbury highway has blown out from \$300 million to \$500 million to \$613 million. I hate to think what the final cost will be. I hate to think what the final cost will be of the Perth-Mandurah railway line. I anticipate the cost will come in a lot higher than the government has indicated so far, because I have spoken recently to Thiess, which is building that railway line and has outstanding claims against the government worth millions of dollars.

There is now a lot of debate in the federal scene about the importance of industrial relations. Australian workplace agreements are the fundamental reason that Western Australia has been in a position to take advantage of the resources boom in China. Western Australia produces 34 per cent of Australia's exports. However, we would not be able to do that without the flexibility that is provided by AWAs. The federal electorates of Canning and Brand are among the top four electorates in Australia when it comes to the number of people who are working under AWAs. The vast majority of the workers in Western Australia are on Australian workplace agreements. If we start to meddle with the prosperity of this state, it will be like shooting the goose that lays the golden egg. The unions are losing traction as far as membership is concerned. The unions have spent \$30 million-odd on a WorkChoices scare campaign. However, the facts presented do not stack up. The facts are that in the December quarter 2006, Western Australia, under AWAs, lost only 900 days through industrial disputes. In the whole of Australia during the same period, 54 200 days were lost through industrial disputes. I will go over those figures again. In the December quarter 2006, 54 200 days were lost in Australia through industrial disputes. However, in Western Australia, which produces 34 per cent of Australia's export income but has only 10 per cent of Australia's workforce, only 900 days were lost. We are shooting way above our belt! There is great reason for us to be very proud of our achievements.

This budget is about lost opportunities. We should be doing better with the money that is available in the budget. I am not the only member on this side who is trying to plug holes in the government's budget. We all want a share of the pie for our electorates. We all want to share in the prosperity. However, the big-ticket items are killing us all.

I turn now to workers' compensation, which comes under another part of my shadow portfolio responsibilities. Some time ago, I brought into this place a private member's bill to provide workers' compensation cover for police officers. I am not going to let this one go! We all have our pet projects! The minister was gracious enough to put together a working party in November last year. Seven months has now gone past. I am looking forward to hearing about the progress of that working party, because I have in my possession a list of documents

Mr John Kobelke; Mr Rob Johnson; Acting Speaker; Dr Graham Jacobs; Mr Peter Watson; Mr John McGrath; Speaker; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Gary Snook; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Grant Woodhams; Mr Mick Murray

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from every member of Parliament who was written to in 1998 by a member of my constituency, asking those members to look at the issue of workers' compensation for, in particular, a senior police constable by the name of Glenn Murray. He was the catalyst for that bill. However, it applies across the whole of the police force. We cannot expect our police officers, who are potentially in a very dangerous position, to not be covered by workers' compensation. It is a joke. I give forewarning, not only to the government side, but also to the Liberal side, because it was a Liberal government at the time. My constituent had responses from people in this place who were ministers at the time about what they would do about workers' compensation. Promises were also made by opposition members at the time. I am going to start putting those responses on the table so that people can read them and see who said what and when, and what little has been done in this respect. However, I will give ample opportunity for this working party to come up with something tangible.

I will jump over to another shadow portfolio of mine; that is, emergency management. An amount of \$10 million will be spent on relocating the Perth Fire Station 100 metres down the road. The fire station at Dwellingup is in need of repair. A State Emergency Service unit, of which I am a proud member, will be without a home as at the end of this month. It has been promised a new facility down the road, but there is no money in the budget for it. Therefore, come the end of the month, that unit will be out on its ear and will be looking for a new home. Nothing is being done about that. I have tried to ring Greg McKay in the south west, minister. Nothing. There are no toilets in the SES unit in Donnybrook. There are issues with the electricity situation at the Saddleback unit in Kununurra, and everywhere in between there are issues for volunteers in fire stations. How can the 30 000 volunteers in this state keep doing their jobs when they are expected to work with poor equipment and in unacceptable conditions? I am sorry that I have run out of time. The time goes very quickly when a person is having a go. However, the general theme is - I am repeating myself - that there is nothing in the budget for the people of my electorate or the people of Western Australia.

**Mr P. PAPALIA (Peel)** [10.31 pm]: As members know, I am a complete novice, not, of course, in the religious sense - that was another speech - but in politics. As a novice - or perhaps a rookie would be more appropriate - I looked forward with anticipation to the approach of budget week. I was excited. To witness the Treasurer and the member for Vasse sparring across this chamber in the lead-up to the budget was like watching two heavyweight boxers - maybe even super heavyweight boxers. I refer, of course, to their intellects. They were circling each other, testing each other, with a jab here and a weave there. I was on the edge of my seat. It whetted my appetite for the final round. The budget would be the crescendo, the main game, the big event. However, I must say that the big game ended up more like the 1992 grand final, when the Eagles thrashed the Cats, than like the grand finals of last year and the year before, in which it was an arm wrestle to the finish with the Swans. The Treasurer made his delivery, and the member for Vasse rocked back on his heels, climbed out of the ring and left the field altogether. He returned later, but only after he had changed game plans.

The member for Vasse had been following plan A; that is, a call for tax cuts. Always lead with a call for cuts to stamp duty for first home buyers. Then follow it up with a call for cuts to land tax. Then, and only then, can a call be made for a reduction in stamp duty on payroll tax. In that way, it sounds as though the person actually cares about people other than those at the big end of town. The member for Vasse was good at plan A, but on budget day he was flummoxed when the Treasurer got the knockout blow in early. The exemption threshold tax level for first home buyers was doubled from \$250 000 to \$500 000. It was doubled.

After helping first home buyers, the Treasurer took on the second part of the opposition's plan, plan A; that is, land tax. He raised the threshold for land tax so that now we in WA pay for just about all properties, except for those at the very top end of the market, the lowest land tax rates in the country. For example, in New South Wales, the land tax on a property worth \$1 million is more than \$11 000. The member for Vasse told us yesterday that the land tax for a similar property in Queensland is more than \$6 000. In South Australia, the tax is more than \$11 000 also. The situation is similar in every other state. However, in Western Australia, a person who owns a million-dollar property pays land tax of only \$1 875.

With those two blows, the Treasurer knocked the stuffing out of plan A. The member for Vasse and the opposition were left with being able to demand cuts only in stamp duty on payroll tax. There is not much in that for the average Joe. There are not many votes in that either. Therefore, the opposition fell back to plan B, which calls for the opposition to deride the concessions made to first home buyers as having no impact. They call for similar concessions across the board for all home buyers. Why would we do that? If we are trying to help first home buyers, why would we give similar concessions across the board to all other home buyers, thereby drawing more buyers into the market, reducing the stock, and increasing the demand for and the price of a home? The effect of doubling the threshold would be wasted and we would not help first home buyers.

**Mr P.B. Watson:** The only people who would make a profit would be the real estate agents.



Mr John Kobelke; Mr Rob Johnson; Acting Speaker; Dr Graham Jacobs; Mr Peter Watson; Mr John McGrath; Speaker; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Gary Snook; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Grant Woodhams; Mr Mick Murray

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**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Exactly. The objective of these measures is to help first home buyers, and the Treasurer has done that. Based on the most recent median house prices from the end of 2006 from the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia, a first home buyer could buy a median-priced home in every single suburb of my electorate, including the southern beachside suburbs, without paying a cent in stamp duty. No-one would know it from listening to members of the opposition, but I believe that that situation would be replicated in the vast majority of electorates in the state. First home buyers in just about every electorate of the state are now in the unique position of being able to enter the market at a reasonable level without having to pay stamp duty on the purchase.

The only other component of the opposition's plan B appears to require the member who is speaking to gaze wistfully into the distance and murmur the word "vision". It is normally used to describe something non-inspirational like a "building", a "pipeline", a "dam" or a "stadium". Apparently, if members opposite use the word "vision" or "visionary" in front of one of those words, the opposition can lift any infrastructure project up out of the norm and into the realm of the extraordinary. If they say it with enough religious fervour, they can even avoid any requirement to justify or cost the proposition. By contrast, the Treasurer and the government have provided the state, through this budget, with tangible, worthwhile infrastructure improvements. There are many great examples of that in my electorate. The first I will refer to is not in my electorate but it is so big that I cannot avoid referring to it. I refer to the big-ticket item of the Fiona Stanley Hospital, which will be built without incurring any debt for future generations. It will be a world-class tertiary hospital that will service the entire rapidly growing southern corridor. It will be more than \$1 billion of real infrastructure. The budget also funds the start of the massive upgrade to the Rockingham-Kwinana District Hospital. The government will provide \$45 million this year and the total cost of the project will be about \$100 million. These hospitals will provide a quantum leap in the provision of health care to the southern corridor.

In education and training, the big-ticket item in my electorate is the Waikiki primary school, which I visited this morning. The government will provide \$7.3 million this year for it to be completed for the start of the new school year. The member for Serpentine-Jarrahdale also raised with me the state of things in Kwinana recently. He will be happy to see that the budget allocates just over \$3 million towards developing the automotive centre at Challenger TAFE, which is in Kwinana and is just outside my electorate. It is not quite in my electorate, but, as the member will understand, it is pretty close. That will be a huge boost to education and training opportunities in Kwinana and it will meet some of the requirements that the member highlighted in his earlier speech. There is a raft of other smaller infrastructure projects scattered around schools in my electorate that amount to around \$175 000. In law and order there is a further confirmation of the government's support to law enforcement in the Peel electorate. Just over \$3 million will be provided to commence work on the Rockingham Police Station's police rail unit. I am also very happy to confirm that the government has kept the promise it made during the Peel by-election to build a police station at Secret Harbour by 2009. This budget provides \$3 million towards its overall cost of \$10 million. It is a fine budget and is one of which the government, and in particular the Treasurer, can be very proud.

Before I finish, I will briefly discuss my recent appointment to the chair of the Defence Industry Skills Advisory Board. It is a role I am particularly happy to fill. Following 26 years of service in the military, I have come to appreciate the need for the provision of the best quality equipment and support to our military personnel. It is a matter that is very close to my heart. The fact that we can do this from Western Australia, through building our economy beyond the boom and providing rewarding careers in trades and engineering for young people, is just cream on the cake. We held the inaugural meeting of the board on Monday, with representatives from across the defence industry, particularly the big players in town, including the chair of the Australian Industry and Defence Network and representatives from the Australian Submarine Corporation, Raytheon, Austal Ships, Formation Design Systems, Tenix and the Anzac Alliance. From the education sector we had Professor Yianni Attikiouzel from Murdoch University, that strong advocate for more engineering graduates; Liz Harris, managing director of Challenger TAFE; and representatives from the Department of Industry and Resources and the Department of Education and Training. It is a fantastic board; it is well represented; it is well supported; and our main objectives, among other things, are to champion the WA defence industry and urge the federal government to give our industry a fair share of the federal government's expenditure on defence acquisition and support. We also hope to actively promote and enhance the image of the defence industry as an employer of choice for young people; liaise with other states as appropriate to share workforce development initiatives; and provide advice to government on defence industry skilling needs and proposed initiatives.

The board and the support provided, particularly by Challenger TAFE, are part of this government's massive investment in training and education for young people, recognising the fact that now any young person who wants to choose a career in the trades will be funded, provided that young person is suitable and capable of meeting the requirements. I am very proud to be part of the board and I look forward to advancing the defence industry in Western Australia.

Mr John Kobelke; Mr Rob Johnson; Acting Speaker; Dr Graham Jacobs; Mr Peter Watson; Mr John McGrath; Speaker; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Gary Snook; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Grant Woodhams; Mr Mick Murray

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I will cut my speech short, as I understand that pressure is on for us to not sit late tomorrow evening. I will finish by again congratulating the Treasurer on an excellent budget.

**MR G. WOODHAMS (Greenough)** [10.41 pm]: I always feel privileged to present my budget reply at this time of evening. There is a very intimate gathering in the chamber; it is almost like a coffee club.

**Mr T.R. Sprigg:** We stayed around especially for you.

**Mr G. WOODHAMS:** I thank the member for Murdoch very much. However, Madam Deputy Speaker, you would appreciate that there is no coffee in the chamber, so it is really just a cool-water club.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is my privilege tonight to share with you and other members of the house a piece which I recently discovered. It is called *Budgeterata*. It was discovered in an old church at Canna, north of Morawa, in 1952, by a local farmer. He was there tending an old gravesite, and when he went into the church to pray for the future - it was a very dry year - he found the following words written in the back of the Bible. When I read *Budgeterata*, I know that it will be something that will guide the WA Parliament in the twenty-first century. I will share it with the house, and I believe that this is the first time that *Budgeterata* has ever been presented in public.

#### BUDGETERATA

Go to Perth amid the noise and haste and remember how much money the government has spent on the metropolitan area.

Where the Treasurer without surrender smiles with benign indifference to the plight of the suffering rural communities.

And speak your truth when you go there because the government is loud and arrogant, and don't be offended by their dull and ignorant displays because that is the way of the Labor Party.

Avoid their front bench, they are aggressive and without humour, truly vexations to the spirit.

And be not surprised that they continually criticise the achievements of others because they are vain and bitter people, exiling their sins of omission to benches at the back of the house.

But do remember when you go to Perth that as a rural member you must remain humble.

Exercise caution in that place because there are those from Fremantle who are full of trickery. Especially he that will jimmymander the electorate to bring credit to socialist ideals.

However be yourself, do not engage in debate with the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, she is of a narrow gauge and will only pay half fare.

Be circumspect too when water is offered in glasses in the chamber, as the minister has a cunning plan to tap the aquifers of the wheatbelt. In the face of drought and aridity, he will dam the country . . . he is a child of the Labor Party.

And take kindly the counsel of the years, listen to the ghosts of WA Inc.

Seek out the member for Avon, for he among them has wisdom and will help you nurture the strength of spirit to shield you from one vote one value.

But do not distress yourself with green imaginings, climate control is born of the fears of fatigue and loneliness of the left wing compromise with tree huggers.

Remember they are the children of the Labor Party, no less than the right, left, centre factions . . . the unions have given them the right to be there. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt pre-selection is more important than government will ever be.

Therefore be at peace with the man named Alan, he is whatever you conceive him to be, and whatever your aspirations and noisy confusion of politics keep a mobile phone in your pocket. Brian can always call you.

With all its sham, drudgery and broken promises it is still the Treasurer's budget.

That is the *Budgeterata*. I think it is a historic document.

I want to touch on some specific issues in my electorate. The first is education. Just imagine the outcomes for all of Western Australia from substantial and continued investment in education in the regions. We have university campuses in Albany, Bunbury, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Broome and Northam. Why would this government not look at establishing teachers' colleges on those campuses? It would provide an enormous boost

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 16 May 2007]

p2274b-2311a

Mr John Kobelke; Mr Rob Johnson; Acting Speaker; Dr Graham Jacobs; Mr Peter Watson; Mr John McGrath; Speaker; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Gary Snook; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Grant Woodhams; Mr Mick Murray

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to those regional towns and cities and also invigorate the teaching system by providing a continuing source of country-focused teachers. This government does not have that vision; it is blinkered and city-centric.

I want to quote from the budget papers in relation to education. It states -

Universities have ageing academic and general staff and face difficulties in recruiting new staff due to national and international competition and skills shortages in many areas.

I often hear the government and its members praising the actions of the Premier, the Treasurer and, in this instance, the Minister for Education and Training with respect to education in Western Australia. Certainly, looking at the budget papers, it is my impression that the government has the capacity to change a range of educational outcomes in this state. I suggest that the universities would be an excellent place to start. We do not need to commit to these projects tomorrow, but certainly I think dialogue with regional universities perhaps might convince the appropriate ministers that if they have difficulties in recruiting new staff due to national and international competition, Western Australia might be well placed to take the lead given its current strong economic circumstances. One of the difficulties is that this government produces an ignorance, an abandonment, of education. Where is the full complement of teachers that the Premier indicated in this house on 22 November last year would be at John Willcock College and Geraldton Senior College for the commencement of the 2007 school year? The teacher shortages at those two public institutions are well documented in this and other places. I think that the government, through this budget, had an opportunity to take the lead, perhaps on a universal basis, on education, but it lacks the consistency and fortitude to do that.

Members may be interested to know that in the electorate of Greenough there are no senior high schools. There are five district high schools - Kalbarri, Northampton, Mullewa, Morawa and Dongara. Students in the electorate of Greenough have only John Willcock College, a middle school, and Geraldton Senior College, which offers the last two years of senior school, as a choice from a public education perspective. There are no other schools to attend if they want to go through to year 12 and the traditional streams. I refer to the rebuilding of the Kalbarri District High School, a school that I visit on a regular basis. I appreciate the work that is being done at that school. It is quite remarkable that three years ago, Kalbarri District High School was not on the government's list of schools to be upgraded and updated. However, the local community, Hon Murray Criddle from the other place and I lobbied the Department of Education and Training on a consistent basis about the needs and requirements of Kalbarri District High School. I have it on a very reliable source that Kalbarri replaced on that list another school that is not too much further down the coast.

Another area of education I want to deal with is the alleged support that this government is giving to staff at high schools, particularly those in the electorate of Greenough, for students in their seventeenth year - that is, their seventeenth year on this planet - to participate in training and other employment. I refer to page 914 of the *Budget Statements* and to the line under "Major Initiatives for 2007-08" which suggests that one of the initiatives for the forthcoming year is to continue to develop programs to assist staff to support young people in their seventeenth year to participate in education, training or employment in 2008. I am sure that the amount of resourcing in the majority of Western Australian public high schools for the sixteenth or seventeenth year of compulsory education - I am on record in this place as supporting the initiative that the sixteenth and seventeenth years be compulsory - is very little in terms of support for staff, support for resources, and support school facilities or programs that enable those two years to be relevant to most people in their sixteenth and seventeenth years.

Another point that particularly concerns me in education can also be found under the heading "Major Initiatives for 2007-08". There are a considerable number of indigenous students at schools across my electorate. I note that another major initiative is to support teachers to create more culturally inclusive classrooms for Aboriginal students through the development and launch of an Aboriginal Perspectives Across the Curriculum website that contains support materials for teachers. Whoopee! If a person can access that website, he or she is probably white and a teacher. It is quite probable that it is impossible for an Aboriginal person, particularly a student, to access any website. I suggest to the Minister for Education and Training, who is not in the chamber, that within the context of this budget he might want to speak to the Treasurer about a range of inclusive programs, particularly from an indigenous perspective. It is my impression that, in some senses, the seven green books I was offered by the Treasurer cost more money than the electorate of Greenough had spent on it. This is a government of symbolism - the Mandurah railway line, the Fiona Stanley Hospital, which will be debt free, we are told. I believe that - debt free. However, I believe that the peoples of rural and regional Western Australia will have to pay this debt for the rest of their lives. I mentioned symbolism recently in the context of another speech I made in this house. As some members in this place may remember, I described standing in the dry river bed of the Greenough River very recently and staring up at Mayley's Convict Bridge, which was built between 1864 and 1866. It was partially destroyed by the floods of the Greenough River in the early part of last year,

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2006, as I mentioned at that time. Circumstances have not changed; the bridge has not been rebuilt, nor have the levee banks along the Greenough. Notwithstanding the transport concerns of the people in the mid-west in the nineteenth century, the situation is not unlike Indian Ocean Drive - full of promise but not yet fulfilled. I think it symbolises, in many senses, the way this government views the mid-west; a government that espouses that it represents and looks after the common man and woman and the common good, while in the same breath it lacks the common decency to give all of Western Australia a share in the economic good times that have been in the main generated in regional, rural and pastoral Western Australia.

As members will appreciate - I have heard other members speak to this particular topic - a future fund based on royalties could be reinvested across much of Western Australia. Some members in this house will be familiar with the 25 per cent royalty proposed by the National Party from all mineral and petroleum profits from regional rural and pastoral Western Australia. This fund could provide the flexible basis for a range of social, economic and environmental outcomes that would give a wonderful choice of opportunities to Western Australians - not just people living in Perth, but all Western Australians and those who choose to migrate to our state. Currently, a predominantly one-way arrangement sees the deadly duo of the Premier and the Treasurer - big man and Robin - grabbing all the wealth and tipping it into Perth. However, a future fund would provide a chance to reinvigorate the regions and, under the National's plan, it would have done.

I want to mention a word very quietly; that word is Oakajee. I will say it again - Oakajee. I will say it one more time - Oakajee. I went looking for it in the budget papers. Now where would it be - under the Mid-West Development Commission on page 304 perhaps?

The mining industry continues to make a strong -

**Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan:** What exactly were you looking for?

**Mr G. WOODHAMS:** Perhaps an indication from the government that it was interested in Oakajee, that it might be willing to dedicate some of its "new-found interest in the mid-west" into dialogue.

**Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan:** New found interest in the mid-west! You've got to be joking.

**Mr G. WOODHAMS:** I am not joking, minister.

**Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan:** The Geraldton port enhancement, the southern transport corridor, the townscape upgrade.

**Mr G. WOODHAMS:** The southern transport corridor, as the minister very well knows, was an idea and a plan developed under the previous government.

**Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan:** One little thing - you forgot to fund it. It was one of your fabulous ideas you forgot to fund, but you could not fund it because the National Party was locked in battle with the Liberal Party. That is why nothing happened in the mid-west.

**Mr G. WOODHAMS:** The minister can continue with the education; I thank her. I continue -

The mining industry continues to make a strong contribution to regional growth and employment.

I am reading comments under the heading of the Mid West Development Commission, which I believe is the responsibility of Minister Kim Chance in the other place. Perhaps some of us understand that. It continues -

The timely provision of strategic infrastructure, including a new deep water port at Oakajee, linked by a heavy gauge rail line, will facilitate the export of high volume bulk products such as iron ore. Capturing local community benefit from this sector provides opportunities and challenges.

Those comments are listed under "Significant Issues and Trends".

**Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan:** You do not agree with the mid-west alliance; you do not think there should be privately funded infrastructure.

**Mr G. WOODHAMS:** Has the minister heard me say that?

**Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan:** That is what you are implying. You have been ferreting through the budget papers trying to find the money that they want to spend.

**Mr G. WOODHAMS:** Did I say that?

**Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan:** Yes, you did. You said you could not find it.

**Mr G. WOODHAMS:** When did I say that? Produce the papers.

**Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan:** You said that you could not find it. You are looking for the money. Because you could not find the money, you said it meant that we were not interested.

Mr John Kobelke; Mr Rob Johnson; Acting Speaker; Dr Graham Jacobs; Mr Peter Watson; Mr John McGrath;  
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**Mr G. WOODHAMS:** I said I was looking for a commitment. I am glad that the minister is passionately interested in this and I hope it is something the minister continues to engage with. I support the minister in her engagement with it. Last Friday, Hon Margaret Quirk came to Geraldton and delivered the budget speech on behalf of the Treasurer in that location. I believe the 80 people who gathered to hear the budget speech were appreciative of many things; I do not deny that. The main thing they came to hear was an indication from the government that there was a significant commitment to Oakajee. I do not believe that has been indicated in this budget. I am certainly prepared to acknowledge that the minister has an interest. I have met with Ian Williams, who is looking at the infrastructure needed. I have met with many of the iron ore proponents. I have also met with Yilgarn Infrastructure, which is the infrastructure proponent. I have an ongoing interest in this. All I simply raise is that the budget - it is not a criticism of the minister - seems to skirt around the issue.

**MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie-Wellington)** [11.02 pm]: Before I get into the good parts of my speech I will comment on the speech given yesterday by the Leader of the Opposition. It disappoints me to read his speech in *Hansard* because he has given up on our manufacturing industries. He said that they are dead and that we cannot compete with China or other countries with lower labour costs. To me that is just throwing in the towel. That will not help our young people or budding young business people.

There is a manufacturing industry that needs support. There is an industry that can compete on the world market. There is no doubt in my mind about that whatsoever. I refer to a young guy from Collie who, some years back, was coaching footy. He took off to Brazil and other places around the world to work. He came back and started an industry. At first it was a support industry to the mining industry. He did that four years ago. He went into building mining equipment. He now has a turnover of \$20 million and employs 100 people. His company is the only one of its type in WA that now has the accreditation from three top-end companies in Australia. His company can do work that is otherwise shipped offshore to European countries. His company continues on despite what the Leader of the Opposition said is impossible. That sort of attitude from the Leader of the Opposition does not do anything for our state. We have got to work on helping younger people who have the skills and who are willing to get out there and take on other countries and provide jobs here. That goes back to the government of the day. At times we find it easier to allow companies to source infrastructure from offshore. If the price was a bit out, we would have our own job creation within WA. It has been said over and over again by those in the manufacturing industry and people working in Kwinana that we should make it happen and that we must have jobs onshore. I say that it can be done on an economic basis with a bit of background support.

It was very disappointing to see the Leader of the Opposition giving away our manufacturing industry. Then he started to give his view of what should happen in Perth. He spoke about setting up a task force, which is fine; I do not have a problem with that. He spoke about sporting stadiums and sporting precincts for the Swan River and a cultural precinct stretching from the Narrows to Burswood and East Perth. He then spoke about the food bowl in the Kimberley and damming the Fitzroy. He forgot all about the south west. There was one line in his speech about the south west. That line was about deep sewerage. That is where he left us, in the sewerage down that way. How a person who comes from the south west - I am talking about the Leader of the Opposition - cannot support the area he comes from is beyond me. I did not understand the speech itself. He came out straightaway and claimed credit for the decision on the Yarragadee aquifer. What a joke! It really makes one question, firstly, his loyalty to his electorate and, secondly, his pride.

I was on the steps of Parliament House with my Country Labor colleagues the day the Friends of the Yarragadee turned up. We took some flak, as we do when those groups turn up. Where was the Leader of the Opposition? He was hiding amongst the crowd. The one who had the gumption to stand up on the back of a truck and take a petition was the minister sitting down the front. I thank him for that. All of a sudden there was a realisation that the country guys from the Labor side of politics were starting to get a bit of traction. We came into this chamber and got yelled at as Country Labor. I thank those opposite for giving us a brand name. It was great; I loved to see that. Since then the government has listened to the people who came to Perth to protest against the tapping of the Yarragadee. For the Liberal Party to claim credit for the government's decision is absolutely incredible. It has no pride and no heart. The issue with the Yarragadee is not passed by any means, but it has been moved back a few years.

I would like to thank our frontbench for its decision on the desalination plant. I do not have problems with it being in my electorate, even though my phone has been running hot. The same people who did not want the Yarragadee tapped now do not want the desalination plant in Binningup. They display the typical attitude of most Australians, especially Western Australians with the amount of land we have, by saying, "No, not in my backyard." I will cop that flak. There are a couple of things I wish to say about the desalination plant. It has to go through an Environmental Protection Authority approval process. People in the communities down that way already have problems and they will have perceived problems when this plant is built. They have to be listened to. They also have to be reminded that it will drought-proof WA. Sometimes we have to do our bit and if we

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 16 May 2007]

p2274b-2311a

Mr John Kobelke; Mr Rob Johnson; Acting Speaker; Dr Graham Jacobs; Mr Peter Watson; Mr John McGrath; Speaker; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Gary Snook; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Grant Woodhams; Mr Mick Murray

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have to drive past a big shed from time to time, so be it. The shire president down there is quite excited about it. There will be \$500 million worth of work in that area. The majority of people living in the Binningup area are younger - some call them the new rich - tradesmen-type people. They will be looking forward to moving from one construction job to another in that area. The desalination plant will not be a huge employer but it will certainly help people in the Harvey, Binningup and Myalup area. People's attitudes will change once they get over the knee-jerk reaction and realise that work is available. They will no longer have to work in far-off places, and maybe can even come back from a fly in, fly out job and start a family life. The decision has been borne out Australia wide, with the interest coming from the east coast. It concerns me a bit that we may have to compete for the manufacturers and the builders of these plants. Although the Kwinana plant has been an outstanding success, other states and other countries will be lining up and putting pressure on the time factors in the project.

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** Don't you reckon it should be powered with Collie coal?

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** The member for Cottesloe has read the press release; the power is not coming from Collie coal. It will come from a renewable source. I will not argue about that; the Collie coal industry is going very well at the moment, much to the disgust of the member for Cottesloe, because he wanted to shut it down when he was in that area, and made that very clear at a meeting in the Collie shire chambers, when he stormed out. I have never forgotten that, and neither has the shire president of the time, Roseanne Pimm. She talks about it regularly. While I am on that subject, 150 people are now working on construction of the Bluewaters power station. There is a funny building out there that is half built. They call it Collie A, because they forgot the "B" bit, and that was the Barnett bit that they took away. It was a 660-megawatt station before the election, and then after the election it was going to be totally canned, but further political pressures allowed half of it to be built. There is one National Party member in the house, and only the National Party supported the Collie A bits. I do not think the member for Cottesloe should fire up on that too much, or he might get coal-fire burnt. He has been there, and he knows what happens.

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** I built that station, after 12 years.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** It is half a station; it is like half a dunny. The doors are still hanging off and knobs are not there. He only built half of it. I return to the desalination plant. I for one will be supporting that plant 100 per cent. The use of renewable energy completes a perfect circle. This has been endorsed by the Sustainable Energy Group. I saw a press release before I came up here tonight that stated that it is one of the best things the group has heard for many years in Western Australia. While I still have a lot to do with the coal industry - I will talk about that in the next few minutes - there are a few things that communities have to accept. The climate is drying. We just cannot pump water out of the ground. There is a model in the northern suburbs that shows that we just cannot keep pumping water out if the rainfall does not come back. One hopes that that will change. I believe the weather pattern is about to change, and the El Niño effect is moving away. I hope that we have a couple of wet winters in a row, which will get things back on track.

I will move over now to one of my favourite areas; that is, the coal industry. I have not seen Collie so prosperous for many years; not since the mid-1980s, in fact, just before it was given another kick in the guts by the Liberal Party. There is almost full employment in Collie at the moment. When I was coming down yesterday morning in the early hours, the number of cars coming from up the hill made the road feel almost like the freeway. People were coming from the surrounding areas to work in the Collie area on construction work and maintenance work on Muja C and D units. A moment went past that not many people really picked up on. In some ways it was probably a historic moment when Muja A and B were retired. Every time there was a bit of trouble with coal-fired power stations, we saw the 40-year-old power stations that were belching because there were no precipitators to take the ash out of the exhaust. When people drove past, it looked like a scene from an old English movie. Those power stations have now been retired. Yes, it cost some jobs; there is no argument about that. However, what was historic about it was that there was no song and cry from the workforce or the community; they understood that the time had come. It just shows that there has been a change in attitude in our community, as well as in the world, towards climate change. There was a great story last week from a miner in the area, Greg Busson, who worked for the Griffin Coal Mining Company Pty Ltd for about 24 years. He gave his thoughts on climate change and the coal industry. It was protected and he agreed with that. He also agreed that it had to come into the real world and face the challenges that confront us all, such as greenhouse gas emissions and how we do business.

Some studies on geosequestration have been done. That was another "not in my backyard" issue. The carbon dioxide would be stored 1 500 metres underground. I got a letter saying that people did not want someone else's rubbish stacked under their houses. People already have a view about what some say is new technology, but what others say could be a disaster. We on the coalfields are spending quite a few dollars. The latest figures indicate that about \$200 000 or \$300 000 is being spent to determine whether a pilot geosequestration plant can be run in the Collie region. Other places are doing it. There is a place under the Harvey ridge where the cap

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rock will hold that underneath. That report should be back to the coal futures group in the next fortnight or so. We are looking at how we do things differently. Another recent milestone in the coal industry was the first shipment of coal to India. Fifty thousand tonnes of coal was shipped to India from Kwinana. I congratulate the Griffin Coal Mining Company for that because it did it without much assistance from other parties, including the government. It shows us that when people think that everything is bad, they buckle down and move on. Griffin Coal and the coal futures group will go to India with a trade delegation at the end of this month. That group consists of representatives from the Bunbury Port Authority; a couple of community representatives, including the shire president; and three senior coal officials from both companies. The competition between the two coal companies is alive and well locally and has certainly brought the price down to a level at which it is competitive with the price of gas; in fact, I have been told that it is cheaper to run coal in Kwinana than it is to run gas, and that comment was from Verve Energy. It is great to see that. In one way, that augurs well for our future. However, I have a word of warning. The question that is often asked is: when are we going to go over to gas? I do not think any state that has alternatives open to it should go to just one source of power, because we have seen what happens after a while. There could be a major disaster with a pipeline or a couple of turbines at Muja could go out at once. We must have a variety of power sources and also some oil-burning units.

The coal industry is alive and well. I take this opportunity to thank members of the coal futures group who have been working with me on changing the direction and also helping out with some of the studies that have been undertaken. Those members are Stewart Morgan, the independent industry representative; Gary Wood and John Kearney, the workforce representatives; Bruce Roberts, president of the Shire of Collie; and Dominique van Gent from the Department of Industry and Resources, the project manager. It is certainly pleasing to work with people in the industry who have the best interests of the town at heart. Many people would know that Stewart Morgan has been around coal-fired power stations for many years and still presents quite a few papers around the world. Worldwide, there is still about 300 years worth of coal. Therefore, we cannot just say that we will close down the coal industry, as Bob Brown did in the federal Parliament. What a ridiculous statement! About 30 000 people work in the coal industry Australia-wide. If we were to shut down that industry in one hit, it would cause a major recession. Coal is either the first or second - it depends on which month's figures we look at - leading export from Australia. I stand to be corrected, but the coal industry is worth \$15 billion to the Australian economy a year. It is a huge industry. To shut it down is just not feasible.

In talking about my electorate, I also need to mention the Mandurah bypass. That is very much welcomed. I thank the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure for the hard work she has put into that project. Although I could say tongue in cheek that it will allow Perth people to go down south - the best place in this state - a lot more quickly, someone has reminded me that I have to go the opposite way! The Waroona town centre development is another project that has been funded through the Peel Development Commission. That is going very well. I forgot to mention when I was talking about the coal futures group that Wesfarmers has commissioned a char plant. Griffin Coal is also applying for a licence to build a char plant that will process 400 000 tonnes of char a year. That is a huge amount. I read a press release from a member on that. However, I will take the credit for that, no worries at all! That will be done on the Ewington site after the community concerns have been addressed. Another project that I am very happy about is that Yarloop will now get a potable water supply and will not need to get water out of a brook. That is very important because of our drying climate. With those comments, I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr J.C. Kobelke (Leader of the House)**.