

**LOCAL PROJECTS, LOCAL JOBS — SPECIAL INQUIRER**

*Motion*

**HON JACQUI BOYDELL (Mining and Pastoral — Deputy Leader of the Nationals WA)** [10.12 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house calls on the state government to appoint a special inquirer, under section 24 of the Public Sector Management Act 1994, to examine the expenditure of \$39 million of taxpayer funds under the Local Projects, Local Jobs program.

It is very important that the house has this discussion today because we need to shed some more light on the Local Projects, Local Jobs fund. It is most certainly a matter of public interest when taxpayers' funds are spent. This morning I look forward to the discussion of this issue. The state budget includes an allocation of \$39 million for the Local Projects, Local Jobs fund, which others have recently referred to as a slush fund. According to a joint media statement by the Premier and the Treasurer on 7 September 2017, and I quote —

The program provides grants to community organisations, such as sporting groups and not-for-profit organisations, to deliver important upgrades to facilities and programs.

The Local Projects, Local Jobs fund is said to go towards about 750 local projects in the metropolitan area and in regional Western Australia. In my view, the Local Projects, Local Jobs fund is a clear abuse of taxpayer funds. We have seen essential services in regional Western Australia and across the metropolitan area cut, but at the same time we have seen the Local Projects, Local Jobs fund given access to \$39 million with apparently no scrutiny by the government of how that money is spent. We also have a political party that, while in opposition, talked an enormous amount about the importance of gold standard transparency and accountability in government spending. I agree with that, but a party cannot claim in opposition that it supports gold standard transparency, and be something entirely different when it comes to government. Local Projects, Local Jobs indicates that there is no transparency on the part of this government in its decision-making.

The opposition in both houses has continually asked about the due diligence and assessment process surrounding the use of that \$39 million, because it is in the interests of the public to know the accountability of that rather large amount of money. Through the estimates hearings, questions on notice and questions without notice, it has become clear that no due diligence processes or clearly defined government arrangements are in place for that expenditure. There was no grant application process. No business cases were developed, no submissions were made and there was no assessment of the need for any of the projects that were delivered. We are not talking here about insignificant amounts of money. Two grants of over \$700 000 of taxpayers' money were awarded to what I am sure were very worthy causes—that is not the issue that I refer to today—with no business case whatsoever and without a competitive tender process. That is absolutely a matter of concern for the public of Western Australia. We know that there was no assessment of need, because some organisations that received funding were later reported in the media as saying that they had no idea why they had received that funding. They said that although they were happy to have it, they did not need the funding and were not sure why they received it. That is very concerning. I have a photo, which I am happy to table, of the member for Pilbara, Kevin Michel, granting \$10 000 on 7 September 2017 for the purchase of laptops by the Port Hedland School of the Air, only two months before the government's announcement that it was going to close the Schools of the Air. Clearly, if the government is going to close the Schools of the Air, there is no need to grant them \$10 000 for laptops. I seek leave to table that photo.

Leave granted. [See paper 1170.]

**Hon JACQUI BOYDELL:** There has been enough political commentary about this fund that paints a very clear picture that this is a significant misuse of taxpayer funds, and the public has a right to know how and why that happened. That is why, today, we are calling upon the special inquirer to examine the basis of that fund and the distribution of those funds. Only yesterday, in the other place, the Treasurer rightly said that government expenditure of \$16 million on the Carnegie wave energy project in Albany, involving a large amount of capital funding, should be scrutinised. I agree with that. If we are following that line of thinking, the \$39 million spent on Local Projects, Local Jobs absolutely deserves some scrutiny. We know that section 24 of the Public Sector Management Act was used by John Langoulant to examine the previous government's arrangements and decision-making processes in apparently randomly selected projects between 2008 and March 2017. The terms of reference of the inquiry included assessing the adequacy of decision-making processes, including the adequacy of processes leading to the awarding of the projects; the adequacy of business cases and procurement processes; whether reasonable value for money outcomes were provided; and, the use of commercial-in-confidence. Those are the terms of reference for the special inquiry into the previous government's randomly selected projects. Those terms of reference go to the very heart of the controversy that surrounds the Local Projects, Local Jobs fund.

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Referring this fund to the special inquirer is an important test for this government. It is an important test of the government's commitment to being transparent and accountable for its decisions. If the government has, as it says it has done, implemented very robust assessment and application processes for state government funding, the special inquirer would be likely to find that. In the interests of being transparent and accountable for taxpayer funds, I think this is soundly a case for the special inquirer. Local Projects, Local Jobs would be his next undertaking, I assume.

On 4 February, Premier Mark McGowan said —

“Every single one of our election commitments went through a rigorous evaluation process.”

The opposition has continually asked: What rigorous evaluation process was that? What criteria did the government use to assess the merit of those individual projects? Where was the value-for-money assessment? What is it and how did the government do it? We have a right to ask those questions. The opposition's continued line of questioning and concern has clearly prompted media and community interest in this issue. How do they get access to the Local Projects, Local Jobs fund? If this is a fund that delivers for infrastructure and community programs that are really important, that is fantastic, but how do they get access to this fund? According to Gareth Parker, and I quote —

“... community groups did not apply for “grants”; instead projects were nominated by Labor MPs and candidates and signed off by a committee of Labor campaign chiefs and senior frontbenchers in the party's leadership team.

How is that a government process? How is that a process that creates governance structure around the use of taxpayer funds? Candidates and MPs had to explain to the committee why the funding was necessary. Gareth also said that he found dozens of projects that had no apparent connection to creating jobs, a question the opposition has long asked. Amounts of money ranging from \$40 000 in Southern River to \$1.13 million in Mandurah was spent in every Labor seat. No Local Projects, Local Jobs money was spent in Liberal safe seats or National Party seats. That is quite glaring, I must say.

**Hon Darren West** interjected.

**Hon JACQUI BOYDELL:** Hon Darren West, that is despite the Premier, if he is listening, stating on ABC regional drive, “All over regional WA we have received attention under this program.” I think that is what the community expects but that is absolutely not what this government delivered. The Premier can pull the wool as much as he likes, but people out there and the statistics and funding show that that is not what happened.

Very highly regarded political analysts have also commented on this fund. According to political analyst Peter Kennedy, it is, and I quote —

a “slush fund” and was pork-barrelling that went too far. “It's pretty crude,” he said. “It's essentially buying votes with taxpayers' money.

**Hon Darren West** interjected.

**Hon JACQUI BOYDELL:** Is Hon Darren West proud of that?

**Hon Darren West:** What else did he say?

**Hon JACQUI BOYDELL:** It seems he is proud of that. There is no consistent statewide policy position on how to apply for the grants. It is available not for all seats, but for seats considered marginal that strategists might call “carefully targeted”. I continue Peter Kennedy's quote —

“It looks like buying votes, and using taxpayers' money to also promote the local member personally.

Fancy that! I think we have pointed that out in this house many times but it has continually been denied by the government. Even today it is being denied by members of the executive of this government in this house.

Again, in Gareth Parker's 4 February article in *The West Australian*, Notre Dame University political commentator Martin Drum was quoted on the Local Project, Local Jobs fund as saying —

“This is not a program of grants,” he said. “That term is completely misleading. You can't have a grant scheme without an application process.”

Yes, I would have thought so too. In James Carmody's ABC news article on 4 February, Martin Drum is also quoted as saying —

“You would expect to see it advertised widely so different people could access them, you would expect to see a clear criteria for those grants that people could understand that is quite transparent.

“You would expect there to be a group or panel of people to consider the value or otherwise and make some kind of economic assessment on those projects before the money is awarded, before the decisions are taken as to what to fund and what not to fund.”

I believe we started asking those questions in this house as early as the budget last year. Those questions are now being asked in the wider community.

The Premier was on ABC 720 when a caller phoned in about her playgroup that got funding with no project whatsoever in the pipeline. During that call she said she thought there needed to be more checks and balances around how this government spent its money. That playgroup got \$20 000 but there was no project in the pipeline about which she knew where that money would be spent and the playgroup felt it was given to it for no reason. That person who called in to 720 whose playgroup had received money under this program had no idea why and thought it had been given something it had not really asked for, yet we continue to see cuts in essential services. It is mind blowing how this has occurred.

Those reasons are exactly why we are calling for the Local Projects, Local Jobs fund to be scrutinised by the special inquirer. How were those projects identified? When were those projects identified? Who was given the opportunity to apply and what criteria was used? If governments expect people to support their decisions, they need to be accountable for those decisions and should apply transparency to the processes and governance arrangements around the decisions they make to fund those projects. We have seen the special inquirer do that on the previous government’s projects, so the Premier himself has set a standard for the scrutiny of governance around taxpayer funds. I suggest that the Local Projects, Local Jobs fund will continue to be a program about which people in the community ask: What has happened here? Why have these projects been given favouritism over other very, very worthy projects in communities? We have to set a precedent when in government and the government has done that by referring former government projects to the special inquirer. Now it is time to refer this one to the special inquirer.

Communities have seen essential services such as education funding being cut while the government has said that we need to impose savings measures but has been splashing around taxpayer funds that apparently deliver important upgrades to facilities without what seems to be a formal program or without giving any reasoning behind how they became more essential than another project that could have received funding. Thanks to Hon Darren West, we now know the government suite of regional education cuts were made to fund Local Projects, Local Jobs and election commitments. That makes communities angry. He acknowledged that himself in this house last week. It makes people angry when their education services are cut to fund \$39 million of Local Projects, Local Jobs with no governance, no reasoning and no understanding of how that has even come about. It is particularly concerning that there has been no assessment of need and no assessment of value for money. We have, therefore, moved this motion to call on the government to appoint a special inquirer to inquire into the Local Projects, Local Jobs fund and deliver some transparency to the community of Western Australia about how taxpayer funds are being spent, because this government is not willing to do that.

**HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House)** [10.29 am]: The Local Projects, Local Jobs program represents something radical. Do members know what that is? It is the delivery of election commitments.

**Hon Simon O’Brien:** Brazen corruption!

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** They are serious words.

**Hon Simon O’Brien:** They are.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** They are very serious words.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I am sure that every member who would like to seek the call will have the opportunity to have their say. The first speaker was heard without interruption or extra noise and was listened to in silence. I would hope that all members would afford that to the speaker who is currently on her feet.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Thank you, Madam President.

It represents candidates, in opposition, making promises to assist local groups in their communities. It represents the delivery of commitments made to community organisations in the lead-up to the March 2017 election. The delivery of those commitments is being managed through existing state government grant delivery processes and procedures. That includes reporting and acquittal requirements.

The motion calls on the government to use the provisions of the Public Sector Management Act to conduct a special inquiry. Those provisions have been used for very serious matters. That includes the inquiry into the government’s handling of bushfires both pre and post those bushfires; the serious cases of child abuse at St Andrews Hostel in Katanning; and the serious questions about the contractual arrangements at Peel Health Campus. Those provisions

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have also been used most recently to inquire into the management in government—not in opposition—of the royalties for regions program. That special inquiry found serious deficiencies in the management of that program. If members opposite seriously think that the commitments made by candidates before a government is elected meet in any way, shape or form the test of what the Public Sector Management Act should be used for, they need to think again.

**Hon Martin Aldridge:** It's taxpayers' money!

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I have listened to the views put by the mover of the motion. Let us look at what the motion actually says —

... to examine the expenditure of \$39 million of taxpayer funds under the Local Projects, Local Jobs program.

Hon Jacqui Boydell relied in her speech on the process by which recipients for grants were identified and by which people applied for those grants. That occurred when we were in opposition.

**Hon Martin Aldridge:** That is not relevant.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Hon Martin Aldridge should ask the member that, because that is what she said. Hon Jacqui Boydell put her arguments in support of the motion, but I do not think she put a cogent case. In any event, in opposition, candidates and members of Parliament were in touch with their local communities and sporting clubs and worked to identify projects that became election commitments. Every member in this place knows that grassroots initiatives make a real difference to local communities. The grants included funding for equipment for sports clubs and childcare centres, and support for domestic violence victims. If members opposite think those grants are not worthy —

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! We have already had this discussion. Members should listen to the Leader of the House in silence, as they did to the first speaker.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** There were some 855 individual grants—276 in the regions and 579 in the metro area. I know it irks members on the other side that we won so many seats. I know it causes them great concern. Frankly, if I were in their position, I would be concerned about the number of seats that we won as well. That is what happened. Those members who were elected are in the process of delivering on the commitments that they made.

I will list some of the grants made under the Local Projects, Local Jobs program. Which of these organisations or groups would members opposite visit and say, “We don't think the process was right, so you shouldn't get the money”? In Joondalup, there was \$40 000 to the Patricia Giles centre to support victims of domestic violence. In Bunbury, there was \$60 000 to the PCYC Ice Breakers pilot program rehabilitation service, \$25 000 to the community care centre for families experiencing the impacts of meth, and 10 000 to the South West Women's Refuge. In Balcatta, there was \$25 000 to the Asbestos Diseases Society of Australia, and \$50 000 to the Osborne Park RSL. In Belmont, there was \$80 000 to Belmont City College for new toilets and change rooms. In Forrestfield, there was \$50 000 to Edney Primary School for new air conditioning. In Morley, there were sports grants for kids at risk—namely, \$10 000 each to Morley Bulldogs, Dianella White Eagles, East Perth Eagles, Noranda Hawks, Tuart Hill Soccer Club, Bayswater Soccer Club, and Perth-Bayswater Rugby Union Club. In Mount Lawley, there was \$5 000 each to the Mt Lawley childcare centre and the Meela Child Care Centre. In Swan Hills, there was \$20 000 to Chidlow RSL to upgrade the war memorial, and \$10 000 to the Bullsbrook Volunteer Fire and Emergency Service. In Bicton, there was \$55 000 to upgrade facilities at Melville Cares, a not-for-profit that supports people in need, and \$25 000 to the Stock Road Senior Citizens Club. In Kalamunda, there was \$10 000 each to the Stoneville, Parkerville, Kalamunda, Darlington and Glen Forrest Volunteer Bush Fire Brigades. In Wanneroo, there was \$70 000 to Wanneroo Secondary College for a new minibus.

Which of these organisations in the following seats would members opposite visit and say, “We don't think the process was right, so you shouldn't get the money”? Dawesville. Who has that seat? Is it us? No, I do not think it is. In Dawesville, there was \$30 000 to the Falcon Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service; \$20 000 for seniors' exercise equipment at Tickner Park and Dudley Park; \$10 000 to the Falcon Men's Shed; \$10 000 to the Port Bouvard Surf Life Saving Club; \$10 000 to Dawesville RSL; \$10 000 each to the Dudley Park and Halls Head Bowling Clubs; \$10 000 to the Falcon Lions Club; and \$15 000 to the Halls Head Community Recreation Centre.

Kalgoorlie—do we hold that seat? I wish we did, but I do not think we do. In Kalgoorlie, there was \$250 000 for dental facilities at aged-care centres; \$50 000 to Coolgardie Skate Park for an upgrade; \$40 000 to the Kalgoorlie Occasional Child Care Centre; \$40 000 for the upgrade of Kambalda pool; \$25 000 for the Leonora children's playground; \$100 000 to the Golden Mile Loopline Railway Society to ensure that the loopline tram stays in the city; and \$40 000 to upgrade lighting in Laverton.

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Geraldton—do we hold that seat? We should hold it, and we came pretty close, but we do not hold that seat. The Local Projects, Local Jobs that will be delivered in Geraldton are \$50 000 for new mammogram services; \$40 000 to Foodbank; \$80 000 to the midwest school holiday engagement program; \$25 000 to the Geraldton Surf Life Saving Club; \$40 000 to Ngala Community Services; \$30 000 to John Wilcock College; and \$30 000 to Geraldton Senior College for ICT upgrades. We spent \$15 000 on each of the following schools: Geraldton Primary School, Beachlands Primary School, Rangeway Primary School, Allendale Primary School, Mount Tarcoola Primary School and Wandina Primary School. We also spent \$10 000 on Strathalbyn Christian College. Those are just some of the projects, and I invite members opposite to tell me which of those community organisations they will contact and say, “We don’t think you should get the money because we think the process by which candidates in opposition made promises to you was somehow corrupt.” I used the word that Hon Simon O’Brien offered to me by way of interjection. I would like to know which of those organisations and community groups members opposite will visit and say, “Because we think the process that the other side used in opposition was not up to scratch, you shouldn’t get that money.” They will not do that. They do not have an argument to put. I do not support the motion.

**HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition)** [10.40 am]: This is a tremendous motion put forward by Hon Jacqui Boydell, and one that the Liberal Party emphatically supports. I would have thought that the government, with all due respect, would have given unanimous support to this motion. How can it hide from transparency? How can it hide from financial protocols? This report I am holding has just been delivered to Parliament, but not in the upper house because we do not deserve to have it tabled in our place. I had to fight tooth and nail to get a copy of it. I do not know whether any other upper house members have tried to get it, but we cannot get it, which is disgraceful. This is the rolled-gold attitude towards transparency and openness, yet we hear nonsense from the Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council about the government’s various policies. I have no doubt that a lot of those programs are very worthy, but that is not the issue. The issue is about openness, transparency and probity. That is what government members have been carrying on about for the past 12 months. The Labor Party has been in office for 12 months—get over it! Start governing and stop worrying about the opposition. All that we have heard about in the past 12 months is financial issues. Does the government not think that after we spent nine years in government, the public got a bit tired of us—got tired of the former Premier, got tired of me, got tired of the former ministry? It is called a change in political fortunes.

The government has been obsessed, absolutely obsessed, with finances. As I said, I love doing this. Government members even had to have speaking notes to tell them what to say. After six months in office, the government still had to trot out the Labor members to say, “We have no option but to fix the mess left behind by the Liberal–National government.” That is one speaking point. Another one is, “Everyone will share the burden to help pay for the Liberals’ and Nationals’ out-of-control spending.” Grow up, you guys! Members opposite do not need to be told what to say. They are still fixated on us after 12 months. It is like the dog that chases the car and gets the wheel and does not know what to do with it! Members opposite have got the wheel—do something with it. They should start governing and stop worrying about us.

None of this has stopped members opposite from going to the launch of Optus Stadium, which they criticised from pillar to post. They love the stadium. Is it not a wonderful achievement of the previous government? What about Yagan Square at last linking the city to Northbridge, a hub of vibrancy? They love that!

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Every member has the right to be heard in silence, as does this member.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Thanks, Madam President. I will not take interjections because I am very restricted on time.

Members opposite loved going to Yagan Square to cut the ribbon, even though they criticised it the whole way through. I loved seeing the Premier and the Minister for Planning at Scarborough last weekend. That was our project. The Premier is off to London again on the first non-stop flight there. Who did that? We did the whole lot. We did every one of those things. As I said before, members opposite sit there with their self-righteous attitudes, but, quite frankly, they should start governing and stop worrying about us. When the government has a project such as the one that I will talk about in a moment, it has to listen to what we are saying because there is merit in what we are asking. We are not asking for anything more than the standards that members opposite have established.

What is the government’s plan to cut the so-called debt that it keeps carrying on about? The government’s plan is to pay it off like one would pay off a mortgage, but it does not have a plan. There is absolutely no plan. How much of the white picket fence has the government paid off in the last 12 months? None of it. It has actually put in an

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atrium and another pool. All that members opposite have done in the past 12 months is moan and groan about us, but there is no plan. Its plan is —

*Point of Order*

**Hon ADELE FARINA:** It is my understanding that the motion is for the house to call on the state government to appoint a special inquirer under section 24 of the Public Sector Management Act 1994 to examine the expenditure of \$39 million of taxpayer funds under the Local Projects, Local Jobs program. So far the Leader of the Opposition has talked about a range of matters that do not relate to the subject of the motion before the house. As entertaining as his contribution is, he really is wasting the house's time. He needs to get on and address the issues in the motion before the house.

**The PRESIDENT:** There is no point of order. I think we have all been here long enough to know that occasionally members take a while to warm up to the actual theme and detail of a motion, and I am sure that that is where the member is heading.

*Debate Resumed*

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I certainly am, Madam President.

Let us go on. There is absolutely no plan to reduce debt. The only thing that members opposite have done in an attempt to reduce debt in the last 12 months is to put up a gold tax, increase payroll tax, freeze members' wages—that will not do a thing to reduce debt—and bring in education cuts. With all due respect, fancy trying to get rid of Schools of the Air. That is like shooting Bambi! Governments just do not do those sorts of things. There is absolutely nothing that members opposite have done to reduce debt. The one thing they have done is introduce Local Projects, Local Jobs. If they want to reduce debt, they need to look at Local Projects, Local Jobs to determine whether it meets the rolled-gold financial compliance standard that the government established. Let us have a look at the Labor Party's financial management plan, which was released to the public before the election. It reads, "Local Projects, Local Jobs—\$22.2 million". But I thought it was \$39 million as it is stated in the budget papers. There is something seriously wrong, yet members opposite wonder why a special inquirer should look into this issue. Of course one should! There is already a huge gap because \$22.2 million was committed in the Labor Party's policy statement but there is \$39 million in the budget, and members opposite bleat about whether the standards are being met.

I will tell members about the criteria for Local Projects, Local Jobs. It includes being a Labor member, a Labor candidate in a Labor seat or being a marginal Labor seat. That is the criteria. There is nothing about business cases, probity checks or potential conflicts of interest. The criteria is to be a Labor candidate, a Labor member, a Labor seat or a marginal Labor seat. So that members know that I am not speaking without substance, I will show them where the money went. In Labor gains—that is, the seats that the Labor Party won in the last election—the average spend of the Local Projects, Local Jobs fund was \$540 636. In Labor-held seats, the average spend was \$454 189. The average spend in Liberal and National seats was \$84 833, and only three of those seats received a significant amount of money or any money at all—namely, Dawesville, Geraldton and Kalgoorlie. Why do members think that money was spent in those three seats? It was because the Labor Party thought that it was in with a chance so it poured a bit of money into them. What about seats such as Bateman, Carine, Central Wheatbelt, Churchlands and Cottesloe? They got zero. What about the seat of Bicton? That was a gain, so it got \$606 000. What about Forrestfield, which was previously a Liberal Party seat? It got \$560 000. The electorate of Joondalup got \$1 000 097. Do members see the pattern emerging here? Do members opposite honestly think that a special inquiry should not look into this? It reeks of political posturing. Members opposite can sit there with their rolled-gold attitude towards standards and financial compliance, but when they have the opportunity to have their system—it is not ours—tested, they say no and object to it.

The Leader of the House went through the programs. We have no problem if the programs are valid—that is great. But for goodness sake, let us go through the probity standards that members opposite are asking for on everything else. They cannot have it both ways. They cannot sit there and say that this money is well spent on this shed or that fence or whatever it might be without going through a probity measure. The Leader of the House was very selective in what she went through. There are dozens of programs in Labor seats. They include \$15 000 upgrades, \$40 000 for fencing, \$20 000 for equipment, \$15 000 for new equipment and \$20 000 for new tools. How can the government just randomly pluck these figures out of the air? All we are asking for is that the special inquiry looks into it and makes sure that every one of these programs went through a stringent forensic assessment to ensure that we are getting value for money. According to the government, it does not have any money; we spent it all, apparently. The government is going on about the forty thousand million dollars, which is the latest cliché and a load of garbage, but all it is saying is, "Okay, we haven't got enough money to spend. We're going to close Moora Residential College. We're going to close SOTA. We're going to close the camp schools. We haven't got enough money for those schools, but we've got \$39 million", not the \$22.2 million that was in the government's

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election paraphernalia. All we need to keep Moora Residential College open is less than half a million dollars recurrent funding. How can the government possibly justify this? It cannot. This is not politics; this is just being reasonable. If the government is going to put in these new standards, it has to adhere to them. The government went into the election knowing that there were revenue issues—the GST share and the resources sector revenue had plummeted—but it still went ahead with \$5 billion of election commitments. It still increased debt in its first budget and then, at the same time, it has this slush fund of \$39 million. The government should get its priorities right and look after the people who really matter, particularly in places like Moora Residential College. We definitely support this motion.

**HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary)** [10.51 am]: I am mindful that many members are seeking the call, so I will keep my comments brief. What a fantastic motion! Talk about leading with your chin—fair dinkum! This is the Nationals WA, which has recently moved its headquarters to sideshow alley and is showing us all exactly why it has done that. What a great motion—far out!

The Local Projects, Local Jobs program spends a lot of money in regional Western Australia and was analysed thoroughly on 11 March 2017 by all the voters in Western Australia and, members, they endorsed it wholeheartedly. If opposition members want to go out to their electorates and tell people that they should not have the money for these projects, that is up to them. I encourage them to do so. If we engage a special inquirer under the Public Sector Management Act, we should look at some of the other inquiries that have been held, such as the inquiry into St Andrew's Hostel in Katanning and the inquiry into the Waroona–Yarloop bushfires, and, now, the Nationals want an inquiry into trashing forty thousand million dollars of the state's finances. Putting this small, modest election commitment into the same basket as those inquiries will trivialise all those other important inquiries.

I will point out to the house something else that completely blows a hole through the comments made by the mover of the motion that this was targeted into marginal seats and Labor-held seats. That is absolutely, patently not true. We committed to Local Projects, Local Jobs in the seat of Geraldton. I know that members think that that is a marginal seat, which might tell us something about the mentality of the coalition going into the last election, but at the last election, the margin for Geraldton was 22.8 per cent. That is not, by anyone's measure, a marginal seat. It was a rock-solid, blue-ribbon, safe Liberal electorate. We went in there because that community had been neglected by the previous government over the last eight years. It promised a hospital three times, and how many times did it build a hospital? Not once.

**Hon Martin Aldridge:** Is it in your budget?

**Hon DARREN WEST:** It is in the budget under administered items.

**Hon Martin Aldridge:** It is not.

**Hon DARREN WEST:** It is under administered items.

**Hon Martin Aldridge** interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Which part of the sitting in silence did you miss?

**Hon DARREN WEST:** The difference between the coalition and the very popularly elected McGowan Labor government is that we will deliver on our election commitments. This motion reinforces to anyone who reads *Hansard* that Labor honours its election commitments. In the seat of Geraldton, the coalition does not honour its election commitments, because it continually promised a hospital to the voters of Geraldton and it continually let them down even though its margin was 22.8 per cent. We came in with a very modest program for Geraldton with some very worthwhile election commitments, and we honoured them. I will run members through a few of these election commitments. I know that the Leader of the House has already run through them but I will run through some others.

We have a fantastic organisation in Geraldton called Access to Leisure and Sport, which enables people with disabilities to participate in pursuits that many of us able-bodied people take for granted. We gave ATLAS \$25 000 under Local Projects, Local Jobs to enable it to build ramps at community places that are not easily accessible for disabled people. From what I have heard today, clearly the National Party does not support that funding allocation. I would like its members to talk to ATLAS and tell it why. The Bundiyarra Aboriginal Community Aboriginal Corporation is a fantastic organisation in Geraldton that does some great work in the town. It used to be able to print a newsletter and distribute it to older Aboriginal people who wanted to keep up with what was happening in the very important area of Aboriginal affairs. The grant for that service from the City of Greater Geraldton ran out. We came to the rescue with \$20 000 out of Local Projects, Local Jobs to enable the printing of that newsletter to continue, and it was very well received. We enabled the Pollinators, a creative hub in Geraldton, to offer the use of its facilities for free to people with new, innovative, start-up and concept ideas. We gave \$80 000 to the Pollinators out of Local Projects, Local Jobs, and watch that organisation go. It really appreciated that money, and already a range of start-ups with new ideas and innovators are using those services right in the heart of Geraldton

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that they could not have otherwise afforded. We gave money to Foodbank. It ran out of food, so we gave it some money to buy some food to put on the shelves in Geraldton. Foodbank has a big, fancy, new premises, but it keeps running out of food at peak times, so we gave \$40 000 to Foodbank in Geraldton to put food on the —

**Hon Martin Aldridge:** Who put in Foodbank?

**Hon DARREN WEST:** It was first put in Geraldton under a Labor government; I will just leave the member with that.

In Geraldton, we have a permanent mammogram service. It is the only one between Perth and Darwin. We have the visiting van that comes around from time to time and does a fantastic job and offers free breast screening, because we all know that early detection of breast cancer increases the chances of survival. However, one machine is permanently in Geraldton to which women can be referred and screened between those van visits. That service was about to close. We propped up that service with \$50 000 out of Local Projects, Local Jobs to enable that mammogram machine to be renewed, and now it is a better service for the community of Geraldton than it was before. The women of Geraldton appreciated that contribution from Local Projects, Local Jobs. I would like members say to the people of Geraldton, “The process was wrong. We don’t agree with you getting this money. We think that there should be some rigorous scrutiny and a special inquirer should talk to you about why you got that funding.” That is nonsense. Members opposite should feel free to do that.

**Hon Jacqui Boydell** interjected.

**Hon DARREN WEST:** I am not taking the member’s interjection.

**Hon Jacqui Boydell** interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! You were heard in silence and I expect you to afford that courtesy to the member on his feet.

**Hon DARREN WEST:** The Geraldton Surf Life Saving Club patrols, I believe, the second most dangerous beach in Geraldton—the Back Beach. It is a fantastic club with great volunteers who do some terrific work throughout the community. When the club’s beach patrol vehicle was stolen and burnt, club members discovered that it had not been insured. We enabled the club, with \$25 000 out of Local Projects, Local Jobs, to buy a new beach patrol vehicle. We asked the club, and it agreed, to call that vehicle “Millie Read” in honour of a fantastic servant of that club over many years. The club’s boat is named after her husband, Bill Read, and now we have Bill and Millie back together at the Geraldton Surf Life Saving Club. It is a fantastic initiative. I would like members opposite to go to that club and tell its members that they do not think that club should have this money. There are many more. We have installed technology at Geraldton Universities Centre to allow students to study remotely. Go and tell those people why they should not have that money. There are many, many others.

I know other members wish to speak so I will end my remarks, but this a fantastic initiative. I am very, very proud of what we have been able to deliver. One-third of those projects are in regional Western Australia, and that is more than the population ratio. Regional members have been able to deliver some great outcomes for regional Western Australia. It is a great program. Members opposite should stop criticising and embrace it, and perhaps acknowledge some of the good work we have been able to do.

**HON MARTIN ALDRIDGE (Agricultural) [10.59 am]:** I rise to support this very good motion moved by Hon Jacqui Boydell. I must say that the government’s defence as we have examined the \$39 million cash-for-votes scheme introduced by the state Labor government has so far been weak at best.

We could consider the expenditure of \$39 million of taxpayers’ funds in many ways. It could be in this house, during question time or by another means, or perhaps even in a committee inquiry. We could ask the Auditor General to examine the expenditure of this \$39 million of taxpayers’ funds—I understand that has been asked for—or we could call for a special inquirer, particularly on the back of the recent inquiry into the state’s finances, to consider how this \$39 million of expenditure fits within the context of his report. I think that is quite a reasonable suggestion. During question time yesterday, Hon Jacqui Boydell asked the Minister for Regional Development whether any of the more than 200 projects under the Local Projects, Local Jobs program that had been funded by royalties for regions had had a business case, and the minister was unable to answer the question and asked for it to be put on notice. I would have thought the Minister for Regional Development in charge of more than 200 projects and expenditure of many millions of dollars of royalties for regions funding would be able to recall at least one business case that she had taken to cabinet. But, no, she was unable to do that and could not recall whether one of the 211 projects she had funded had a business case—rather odd.

The defence of the Leader of the House was that the decisions were made in opposition, so we should not scrutinise them, and that decisions made in opposition are not decisions made in government. But the Leader of the House fails to realise that this is the expenditure of taxpayers’ money. It does not matter when and who made the decision. It is not just about the granting of the money and the process, it is about how that money is acquitted, milestones



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for the project, whether the money has been spent wisely by the group or individual that received it and whether the project was actually delivered. The answers to those questions may not be known now, but they will need and have to be answered in future. This is taxpayers' money.

Looking through a list of the 600 or so projects—that is not quite all of them—there are some peculiar ones. Hon Darren West's defence was, "If you don't support Local Projects, Local Jobs, you don't support any of the program." He just completely misses the mark. To be honest, only the Labor Party supports this. I have not found anybody else. Listening to the ABC, callers ring in and say, "We've been given this money. We didn't ask for it. We're not quite sure how to spend it. We asked them whether we could use it differently and they said no." It is just bizarre.

Anyway, this week I interjected on the Minister for Education and Training during a debate on education. She was talking about all the things she was doing in education, and we were talking about the agricultural college trust funds and her raid on them. I asked whether that was how she was going to fund Perth Chihuahua Rescue. She responded that she did not know what I was talking about and suggested that I was making a bad joke, but the reality is that Perth Chihuahua Rescue was one of projects funded under Local Projects, Local Jobs. I understand it went to cabinet; the Leader of the House is a member of cabinet, and so she approved the funds. It was no joke. This is no joke. This is taxpayers' money that she is spending while cutting services in other parts of the state, particularly in regional Western Australia, yet she cannot get across the detail of her own government's program, despite what she and Hon Darren West have said about how great it is. It is no joke.

**Hon Nick Goiran:** Has she paid that money back?

**Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE:** I am not sure. She did not answer that.

Then we go on to Perth Vet Bill Assistance, which sounds like a noble cause. I am not quite sure what it is about—helping people pay bills supposedly. But what about people who have vet bills in Geraldton, Albany, Esperance, Broome or Port Hedland? Do their vet bills not matter? How some of this program has come together is just bizarre.

Questions were asked this and last week through Hon Tjorn Sibma about the residual moneys of the \$39 million fund. In excess of \$1 million is left in the fund as a result of rounding associated with the initial budget submissions, as well as underspends. That would go a long way to fixing some of the damage done by the Labor Party in regional Western Australia, and not just to Moora Residential College or our camp schools. It might fund a few more community resource centres that the so-called Minister for Regional Development is defunding. It might support some of those regional childcare centres that lost all their funding under this new Minister for Regional Development. Looking at this big long laundry list of projects, quite a number of metropolitan childcare centres, in particular, are getting funding. Regional childcare centres obviously do not matter to this Minister for Regional Development.

I pay credit to Hon Darren West; at least he is honest enough to own up to the fact that this government's decisions around budget-saving measures are about funding their election commitments. They are not about budget repair. That is plain and clear from the government's budget papers, which show the government will add \$10.8 billion to the state debt over the next four years. So I applaud Hon Darren West for coming clean, but I think he needs to go a bit further and come clean on his Local Projects, Local Jobs scheme.

The Leader of the House challenged us to meet with groups in our electorates that have received funding from Local Projects, Local Jobs—\$39 million of taxpayers' money. Some analysis done by *The Sunday Times* was based on figures provided by the government. Somebody mentioned that \$84 833 was the average spend per electorate. That is somewhat challenging for me, because there are four districts within the Agricultural Region: Geraldton; central wheatbelt; Moore; and Roe. Let us look at the Agricultural Region. The Leader of the House and Hon Darren West mentioned a small number of projects in Geraldton that received funding. Let us make no bones about it: the Labor Party thought it would win Geraldton at the last election, and very nearly did. If only it had splashed a bit more cash, I reckon it would have crossed that line. I have been paying close attention to the awarding of \$750 000 funding in Geraldton, but the problem is that the other parts of my electorate—central wheatbelt, Moore and Roe—received nothing. That is odd, because do local projects and local jobs not matter in three-quarters of my electorate? It is plain and clear from the good work and advocacy of Hon Darren West, as a member of the opposition going into the last election, dishing out the cash across his electorate, that Geraldton was the only interest of the Labor Party. Why was that? Because it thought it would win. A media statement issued on 7 September by Hon Mark McGowan and Ben Wyatt stated how this was going to support so many community organisations, sporting groups and not-for-profits, deliver important upgrades to facilities and programs, and help the people of Western Australia and create jobs at same time, but not in three-quarters of my electorate because it received absolutely nothing. It is just bizarre.

The government keeps talking about prioritising expenditure and making some hard decisions. We need spend only 10 minutes looking at this laundry list of funding to start to question the process the government has put

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in place and its non-answer to numerous questions in this house about this program. It is definitely hiding something. I think the special inquirer should look at plenty of other things, including the \$20 million power point that Hon Alannah MacTiernan wishes to put in the Southern Ocean to provide one megawatt of energy from a wave farm. I am not quite sure what will happen to that power point in the ocean. Maybe the government might start advocating for some innovative project to have clean, green electric boats that can go out to a power point and charge up in the Southern Ocean, because God knows how else we will use one megawatt of power stranded out there.

**HON MARTIN PRITCHARD (North Metropolitan)** [11.10 am]: I would like to make a brief contribution today on the motion by Hon Jacqui Boydell. I premise my remarks by saying that I do not doubt the integrity of any member in this house, or indeed in the other house, to try to do their best for the people of Western Australia. However, the hypocrisy of this motion is devastating and very scary to me. What is scary about it is that I either think that the opposition is playing politics or it is blind to the deficiencies of its last government. A lot of comment has been made about the spending of the last government and there has been a report about the deficiencies of that spending. But there are two parts to that spending: one is a real worry and one is devastating. The real worry is that the last government went on spending sprees with money that it did not have and it built some very, very good projects with that money. There may not have been business cases for those projects—the new home of football is a magnificent structure and I look forward to going there one day—but that is not the real problem. A lot of members are new to this house and maybe they will be confused by the games that are being played about what the real problem is. The real problem is that the last government took its eye off the ball and built into the budget structural deficits; deficits that continue into future governments like ours. I explain things in very simple terms just so that I understand them, so I will see whether I can explain this simply, as I have done previously.

I have talked about being a shop assistant, and I am very proud of my time as a shop assistant. I look at being a shop assistant on a wage of about \$35 000 a year, as I think it was then, and having the opportunity of getting a job in the north west and earning a bucketload of money, and then deciding that I was going to buy a car—a brilliant, brand-new car for my family. That is spending, and people do that when they get a bit of money. That is one type of spending. The other type of spending is that I decide to get a million-dollar house and get into a big mortgage for 30 years that, if I were still a shop assistant, I would not be able to afford. Then I lose my job in the north west and I come back. I can sell my car—I probably still have money to pay on it but I will be able to manage that with a small loan—but I cannot sell my house because the whole economy has gone down. I still have to pay a mortgage on a million-dollar house on a shop assistant's wage. That is what the last government did to us. That is why the deficit continues to grow. If I am wrong, I am happy for people to tell me I am wrong, but I do not think I am. I think what the former government did was have a big spend and borrow a lot of money that we are going to have to pay back. That is one problem. However, the other problem —

**Hon Martin Aldridge** interjected.

**Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD:** I am not taking interjections. I do not take interjections and I do not make interjections.

That is what the last government has done to us. It left us with a continuing deficit into the future. That means that we are going to have to make hard decisions. Those decisions are going to upset people. They will upset people; of course they upset people. They upset people even if they can do without what is going to be taken away. I understand that the gold tax was not popular, but it was a measure that may have helped the economy, and it was put back to this house with amendments to try to deal with the major parts of the concern.

*Point of Order*

**Hon JACQUI BOYDELL:** I do not see the relevance of the argument to the motion, so can I ask that the member actually makes some comment on the motion.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Thank you for raising that. I am sure Hon Martin Pritchard is getting towards addressing the motion, as he has done previously.

*Debate Resumed*

**Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD:** Thank you, Madam President. I will work towards giving that response to the motion. As I said, the concern with this motion is that it actually scares me that the National and Liberal opposition either do not understand what they left us with or they are playing games. The problem is that they are very good at playing games. They are very good at convincing people. They might convince the crossbench that they are right, but the people who are right are the people who voted on 11 March last year. I could hope for many things

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including that the vote was different and that we got more people in the upper house. As a Whip here, that would make my life far simpler. However, I am not going to question the vote because the vote is the vote and they are the ones who get the opportunity to have their say. What concerns me is that the make-up of this house is apt to be persuaded by political gains. Members opposite are not just doing us a disservice—I do not have a problem with that—but they are actually doing a disservice to the people of Western Australia. They need us to take the economy in hand and turn it around. It is not the capital spends that are the problem. We will pay off that debt and we will have something to show for it. If the opposition thinks that everybody on this side criticises it for building things, I do not. What I do criticise it for is being in a lot of ways very slack with the economy and building in a structural deficit that has to be dealt with. As I mentioned, the gold tax is not a popular tax. When we look at the price of gold today, we probably could have afforded it, but anyway, it was a measure and this government is trying to put in place measures to deal with the problems that have been left to us.

The problem with this motion is that members opposite fail to understand that it has had the best test of all; 11 March last year was the best test. There were capital spends in the electorates. I say one thing with regard to that and it relates to a comment my colleague made about Geraldton: if members think 22 per cent is a marginal seat, they are crazy. Twenty-two per cent is not a marginal seat in any way, shape or form. Can I say, we kept the promise even though we did not get the seat because this government is committed to keeping its promises. That is something that the public has to have confidence in their government to do.

Several members interjected.

**Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD:** Madam President, I think I indicated that I do not take interjections and I never give interjections. If anybody can point to one time that I have ever interjected on a person making a speech, I would encourage them to come to me afterwards and point that out, because I never interject and I would like to be heard in silence.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Member, I suggest that you just continue and I am sure the others will listen to you.

**Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD:** Thank you, Madam President, I will.

As I have indicated, the former government left us with a real problem that we have to deal with. I encourage everybody in this chamber to assist the government and the people of Western Australia to deal with those problems in an earnest way. I do not make any imputations about anybody's reasons or their integrity, but the political gains as put forward by this motion are not worthy. I encourage people to use this time in a more beneficial way.

**HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan)** [11.18 am]: Not surprisingly, I rise to speak in support of the motion by Hon Jacqui Boydell. In so doing, I want to reflect on the contribution just made by Hon Martin Pritchard. Holding the government to account is not indulging in political gamesmanship. Holding the government to account is not manipulating newer members of this place. Holding the government to account is not manipulating the crossbench. I think the member does a disservice to the chamber for insinuating otherwise. We are attempting to hold the government to account for the management of Local Projects, Local Jobs and, to be perfectly honest, I am surprised that the government is not leaping at the opportunity to have an independent arbiter investigate the litany of projects funded by this scheme.

The issue turns on why Hon Jacqui Boydell felt it necessary to move a motion in this place in the terms that she has, and there are two principles underpinning that. One is the very high benchmark that the Premier set publicly for the accountability and performance of the government he leads. I refer to a PerthNow article written by Rebecca Gredley and published on 20 March 2017, titled "First cabinet meeting for WA McGowan government". The direct quote from the Premier in the article is —

"I want to make sure we run a transparent, accountable government that is characterised by decency, and ministers and members who behave properly."

That is a very clear, unambiguous and fair statement, and a noble sentiment.

If we jump forward a little, about 11 months after that quote was provided, on 20 February 2018 the government tabled the report of the special inquiry it commissioned John Langoulant to carry out. There is a motion to be moved that turns on the Langoulant report; I think it is the next one. It might be worth reflecting on the Premier's statement in respect of the tabling of that report. I refer to a media statement released on 20 February 2018 by the Premier, Hon Mark McGowan, which states, in part —

**Comments attributed to Premier Mark McGowan:**

...

"The damning report provides a clear guide to my Government and future governments.

"My Government will continue to strengthen governance, accountability, transparency and focus on the key economic and social benefits of government decisions when dealing with taxpayers' money.

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Most of the contributions we have heard from government members turned on, “Well, you go and tell these community groups that this project was unworthy, or that they were undeserving.” That is not the argument that this side is prosecuting at all. The overall issue is: Is this an adequate, appropriate expenditure of taxpayers’ money? Is the taxpayer getting value for money? Is there a competitive process that weighs the merits of one project getting funding to the exclusion of something else? This money is not about budget repair; I think Hon Martin Pritchard insinuated that it was, but it is not. It will get us no closer to repairing operational budgets, year on year. This is moving money around and is going nowhere towards budget repair. But this kind of expenditure comes at a cost; the money has to be taken from other parts of the government’s budget.

As best as I can deduce from the budget papers—this is budget paper No 2, volumes 1 and 2—money for the funding of Local Projects, Local Jobs was appropriated from other agencies. In total, about \$4.2 million has come out of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet; \$6.6 million from the Department of Education; \$2.3 million from the Department of Communities; around \$500 000 from Western Australia Police Force; \$10 million from the now Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development; and a staggering \$13.4 million, or thereabouts, from what is now called the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, and the major portion of that came from the former Department of Sport and Recreation, which ran and continues to run, in some form, a grants process known as the community sporting and recreation facilities fund.

What has happened is that individual grants schemes administered by independent agencies have been raided to create a new fund to support election commitments. That new fund does not include governance structures, so the government has taken the cash but has not taken the governance structures with it. This is actually a serious issue that probably demands external evaluation by somebody qualified to undertake such an evaluation. The reason I am motivated to speak in support of this motion is that very elementary, basic questions that I have put to ministers in this place have elicited a series of non-answers, evasions and deflections that are completely unnecessary. If this fund is as good as the government says it is, I would have thought members opposite would run to embrace my questions and declaim how wonderful this fund is, but that has not been done.

What piqued my interest was the government’s description of Local Projects, Local Jobs. The Treasurer himself referred to it as a grants program. It is not a grants program. I have on a number of occasions asked the Premier, through the Leader of the House, what kind of program it is. Is it a grants program, yes or no? The reason I ask that is that, on the one hand, the Treasurer has said that it is, but then as recently as last month, during debate in the other place on 13 February, the member for Armadale quite explicitly said that it is not a grants program, so I am confused. What is it? If the government cannot tell me that it is a grants program, it must be some other kind of program. The government in its media releases initially referred to it as a grants scheme. These included media releases from Hon Alannah MacTiernan on 5 July 2017 and Hon Simone McGurk on 26 July and 18 August 2017, but after that the word “grant” was dropped from official government communications. I wonder why that is.

**Hon Darren West:** Will you take an interjection?

**Hon TJORN SIBMA:** Not in the time available, sorry, Hon Darren West. I might get the chance.

I am particularly curious about grant administration for one good reason: a report tabled by the Office of the Auditor General on 7 July 2016, titled “Grand Administration”. I will read very briefly from page 4 of that report. It states —

A grant is a financial assistance arrangement or contribution provided to either a non-government organisation, another public authority or an individual for discrete purpose and period, by either instalment or lump sum.

That seems to have occurred, but the government refuses to say whether or not these financial transactions are grants, and I just do not know why. This might be why the word “grant” has been run away from. The report continues —

Good grant administration ensures that grants are awarded equitably, expended for the intended purposes and contribute to the intended program outcomes.

It is very simple; this is basic level accountability that the government cannot fulfil.

Yesterday I asked a question in this place in respect of four individual programs funded to a value of between \$200 000 and \$400 000. I asked for a business case and details of the grant. The response I got from the Leader of the House, according to the uncorrected *Hansard*, was, in part —

The Department of the Premier and Cabinet maintains records for projects administered by this department.

But effectively, I was referred to other agencies. That was in contradiction to a response I received from the Leader of the House on 28 November 2017, in which she said, in part —

**Extract from Hansard**

[COUNCIL — Thursday, 22 March 2018]

p1181c-1193a

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The Department of the Premier and Cabinet is monitoring the delivery of grants, including when projects are complete and appropriate acquittal information received.

That is a misdirection. I do not think the government has a handle on where this money is going at all, and I am going to dig, case by case, project by project, until we get an answer.

**HON MICHAEL MISCHIN (North Metropolitan — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [11.28 am]: I echo the comments made by Hon Tjorn Sibma, who has done a considerable amount of work on this subject. I am frankly astonished that the Labor Party, now that it is in government, is either so obtuse or so frightened of the truth that it is not prepared to acknowledge what has happened here, and I will give my theory in the absence of any concrete information being provided by the government—rather, it has provided prevarications, evasions and contradictions. I suspect that, before the last election, riding on a high, the then opposition wanted to cement its chances of achieving government. Essentially, through its Labor Party central committee, which decides the strategies, it decided to pick, out of the 59 seats, those that it was likely to win or make some headway in, and give all the members a budget. It could be \$750 000; it could be \$1 million—spend it. Some candidates asked whether they could afford it. “Don’t worry about it,” was the answer, “we’ll find the money.” I can see Hon Darren West smiling in the knowledge that this was the way it went. The candidates went around handing out money. The purpose of it was to get media exposure and to garner votes. Ultimately, it succeeded in some respects. Hon Darren West is smugly laughing away there, thinking, “Yeah, that’s the way it went, and there’s no way of being able to prove it.” Well, we will get to it, Hon Darren West. Some of the examples he has given indicate the problem—\$20 000 for a newsletter. Are there no other organisations in Geraldton as needy as that? Was there a proper grant process to assess the social merit of handing out \$20 000 of taxpayers’ money for a newsletter, as opposed to winning favour with a small niche group? What about the start-up centre—\$80 000? Can the member give us any information about how that has actually worked, which organisations have made use of these so-called facilities, and whether it has actually given any benefit to taxpayers generally, rather than the particular group that he is trying to buy votes from? What about all the expenditure out of the education budget? It is all very well to say \$6 000 here and \$8 000 there for a shade cloth, but which projects in the education budget, such as security fencing around schools, that have been awaited for quite some time and have merit, have had to be abandoned in favour of a gift from a local member or candidate? The justification that somehow these are election commitments, and that it is okay, is patently nonsense. There is a lot further to go with this.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.