

GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE

Motion

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition) [10.18 am] — without notice:
I move —

That this house notes the dysfunctional relationships within the government, the resulting disruption to the process of good government and its adverse effect on the confidence of the Western Australian people in their government.

When I started to put together the material I wanted to rely on for my contribution this morning, I had so many media references that I had to dump half of them, because I just could not fit all of them into the 20 minutes I have to speak on this motion this morning. I want to focus my comments on two sets of dysfunctional relationships. There is the dysfunctional relationship between the coalition partners—the Liberal Party and the National Party—and I will get to that in a moment. Then there are the dysfunctional relationships, which frankly I think are more worrying, amongst the Liberal Party members of the government. We know that the Premier has declared that the Liberal Party can actually form government by itself if its coalition partners, whom I notice are absent on urgent parliamentary business this morning —

Hon Donna Faragher: Hon Col Holt is here.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Sorry—my apologies; I withdraw.

Hon Donna Faragher: It is an alliance, not a coalition.

Hon SUE ELLERY: That is an interesting interjection, because the only form of partnership there can be in government in the Westminster system is a coalition. Nothing else is recognised. Although the government might like to use the term “alliance”, in fact the only partnership that our parliamentary system of democracy recognises is a coalition.

Hon Ken Travers: Or a minority government.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Indeed, or a minority government. It has to be one of those.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon SUE ELLERY: I was responding to an interjection. Maybe members missed the interjection.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! We know that this is a time-limited debate, so it is only fair that every member who stands to speak gets their allocated time without too many interruptions. A constructive interjection is fine; it adds to the debate, but too many mass interjections do not.

Hon SUE ELLERY: We find ourselves in a situation in which the latest cabinet member, the new Minister for Housing, said on Monday, 8 August that the Premier cannot win, that the most recent government budget is a dud—that is my word, not his; he used another expression, but it had the same meaning—and that this government has no economic plan. What was interesting to me to note about that was that the only National Party member who took issue with that publicly was the outgoing Leader of the National Party, Hon Terry Redman. On the basis that the man who made those comments then went on to become the Leader of the National Party, and that was apparently unanimously supported by members of the National Party, I have to assume that they agreed with his assessment that in fact the Premier could not win the election, the budget was a dud and there was no economic plan.

We also had the absurdity, if you like, in question time in this place on Tuesday when the Leader of the Government—soon to be Leader of the Opposition—said in response to a question from me that he is very comfortable with all his National Party colleagues and that he knows that all his colleagues feel comfortable with their National Party colleagues. The reason I say that that is absurd is that that is not what they are saying when they are walking along the corridors and chatting to people. I would say that discomfort is the predominant emotion. It is true that, from time to time, every party has their differences of opinion; there is not a shadow of a doubt about that. What is different here is that it just will not go away. The niggling leadership talk just will not go away. There is story after story after story. In fact, every time Dean Nalder speaks on it and uses the words “at this time” or “not at this time”, he keeps the story going a little longer. He should either say it unequivocally or just say nothing. It is not my job to give him political advice, but every time he does that, he gives the story greater legs.

Extract from Hansard

[COUNCIL — Thursday, 18 August 2016]

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Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Col Holt; Hon Darren West; Hon Helen Morton; Hon Kate Doust

What are the dysfunctional relationships that exist? There is a dysfunctional policy position between the Treasurer and the Premier on Western Power, but we can talk about that a bit later. There is what looks to me to be an increasingly poisonous and dysfunctional relationship between the Treasurer and the Minister for Transport. Whether that is about leadership matters, who said what at the secret meeting that the member for Forrestfield apparently set up, tunnels in Morley or the Thornlie–Cockburn connection, or who has been undermining whom and who has been preparing Treasury documents and who has not, that relationship is an extraordinary state of affairs.

It goes back to who said what to whom at the meeting that was held at Dr Nahan’s house in 2014. Media reports tell us that despite the two men pledging never to reveal the topic of discussion, in fact two competing versions of that discussion were revealed to journalists. One version has Dr Nahan saying that he did not believe that the government could win the next election. This was in 2014, and that was the view that was allegedly expressed by the Treasurer then. He did not believe that the government would win the next election under Mr Barnett. He learnt that numbers being counted by disaffected upper house Liberals—I am not sure who they are, but I reckon I could guess—had unearthed a body of support for Mr Nalder. Dr Nahan is said to have told Mr Nalder that Mr Nalder was not ready to lead the party because he had entered Parliament only the year before. Dr Nahan encouraged Mr Nalder to throw his supporters behind him to become the next Premier.

The other version of what happened at that meeting is that Mr Nalder sought the support of Dr Nahan to roll the Premier and that the Treasurer balked at that. We have been told that the Premier was aware of both versions of the story but said that he had heard only the one that was favourable to Mr Nalder earlier in 2016. Back in June when the story broke, Mr Nalder did not deny that the meeting took place but said that he did not want to add to leadership speculation, which was destabilising to the party and the Premier. He denied that he had sought Dr Nahan’s support and would not be drawn on whether the Treasurer had sought his: “This rumour that I sought the support of Mike Nahan in 2014 to become Premier is absolute nonsense and didn’t happen”. Dr Nahan also did not deny details of the meeting, including that it was at his house, but said, “I strongly refute that I have ever approached anyone seeking their support for the leadership.” He went on to say, “I can only assume these claims—following those recently made by property developer Nigel Satterley—are part of a calculated campaign to discredit myself and my support for the Premier.”

What also emerged in the days following the breaking of that story was that Dr Nahan ended the meeting when his guests began making off-the-wall and ridiculous suggestions. Part of the genesis of that meeting, according to Mr Nalder, was that the member for Forrestfield rang him on behalf of Dr Nahan and said that he had been called by Natasha Cheung, who used to work for the Treasurer and ran for the Liberal Party as a candidate for West Swan in 2013, and asked whether he would come to a meeting to talk about leadership matters. That was back in 2014.

If we move forward a little bit, the story was more about Dean Nalder and Dr Nahan, with Dr Nahan encouraging people who were unsettling the team to get on and focus on the real job of winning the next election. This comment was made in the context of a dispute between whether there was support for the Minister for Transport’s proposal for a Morley tunnel. Against that, Dr Nahan said that he preferred—this is playing out in public, not behind cabinet doors where these things should be sorted out—that the Thornlie–Cockburn line be built, and so it went on.

Is that the only level of dysfunctional relationship? No, it is not, because a bunch of other members who hold positions have taken issue with some of the things that this government has been doing and have been not just reflecting about particular policy positions, but also saying that the government’s position on particular policy positions reflects poor management across the board. The proposition put in January this year by former minister Murray Cowper was that the state government had drifted from true Liberal policies and was bleeding voters because of poor financial management. Mr Cowper said in January that there were a lot of disenchanted Liberals out there. He said, “We have got to just hunker down and get some decent policies, revert back to true Liberal philosophies. I must admit, we have drifted away from that position. We are losing our heartland.” When he was asked where the government could have improved, Mr Cowper said, “How about some decent fiscal management? Our strength has always been looking after the economy. Yes, you can complain about the GST”—we are all going to do that in about an hour’s time—“and argue we’ve had a big influx in population and had to build infrastructure but I would have thought we would be a bit more sound in our economic management.”

Also in January comments flowed from my good friend and fellow member for South Metropolitan Region the government Whip in this place, Hon Phil Edman, who expressed doubt that Premier Colin Barnett was the best person to lead the Liberal Party to next year’s election. That resulted in a series of stories about how there were moves by government MPs to remove him from that position because of the views that he had expressed about whether the government could win. Then there was the move of Hon Nigel Hallett from the Liberal Party to the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party. There was some public speculation that that move was to try to protect the

Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Col Holt; Hon Darren West; Hon Helen Morton; Hon
Kate Doust

Whip's position and so he defected at that time. I think the defection was always on the cards, but he defected at that particular time as part of some effort to protect Hon Phil Edman.

There are stories about special meetings and certain Liberal members of Parliament being called into the Premier's office to try to pre-empt any further damaging talk of leadership changes and there is further talk about land tax and Mount Lawley MLA, Mike Sutherland, talking about land tax hikes. It is not unusual for members to take different views on policy issues; I have no issue with that. I do not think it reflects a sense of dysfunctionality per se. However, it is a different matter in the context of ongoing leadership talks, which is the context Mike Sutherland put it in when he said, "I'm disappointed; land tax is a wealth tax, and about two months ago, I brought it up in the party room. I don't believe that it's a catalyst for a spill but there are a lot of backbenchers and ministers who are unhappy." Another Liberal backbencher, who asked not to be named, said that the land tax had been a festering sore for Liberals. "I don't just want aggregation looked at; I want it changed," they said. That was those members taking a legitimately different position on a policy issue and saying, "Actually, in the context of leadership, this is causing us a problem." They are ongoing stories that add to the general picture of complete dysfunction.

In the last few days, in fact, there has been much grumbling in the corridors of this place by many Liberal members about what was described by one of them as the Attorney General's insensitive, inadequate and inept public response to the bail arrangements for a horrific criminal, who has been convicted as part of the eight men who were part of one of this state's most horrendous child abuse cases. In the end, the Premier had to step in and try to adjust both the political public message about how the government did, indeed, find that situation completely unpalatable as well as take whatever technical steps had to be taken. But the Attorney General could not see that the public image he was presenting needed to be a lot more sensitive.

Then we had the stories emerging at the love-in, which was meant to be an effort to settle tensions. In fact, we are told by media reports that the Minister for Transport —

Hon Helen Morton: If you are so sensitive about machinations, you want to join us so you can get right inside it all. I think you should. I think you should try very hard to become one of us. Your dad was.

Hon SUE ELLERY: This is completely weird.

Hon Helen Morton interjected.

Hon SUE ELLERY: If I need anyone to be —

Hon Helen Morton interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Liz Behjat): Order! Other members will get their opportunity to make a contribution once the Leader of the Opposition has finished her contribution.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Thank you very much. I note the member's reference to my dad. I appreciate that she thinks she has a point of view about the views of members of my family. I think there is a standard rule: I can criticise my family and I can criticise my dad's political choices —

Hon Helen Morton: I didn't criticise him; I agreed with him.

Hon SUE ELLERY: — but you cannot. You do not go raising my family and I will not go raising yours.

Hon Helen Morton: I was praising him.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Let us move on.

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Indeed. Let us move on.

We are told that Dean Nalder stood up at the love-in and expressed his outrage and anger about how he felt he was being undermined by the Treasurer in major decision-making within his portfolio. The fact that that happened is probably not that unusual because the point of love-ins is to raise issues and talk about what we have done well and what has not worked and then move on. It is not unusual for people to raise serious points of difference, except, given the language in which that was reported, someone thought it was serious enough—from the way the story was written, they were a supporter of Mr Nalder—for it to be leaked. They wrote the story in such a way as to say it was not about a difference of opinion; it was that the Minister for Transport said that he was, basically, being undermined. There was a deliberate strategy by the Treasurer to undermine his position as a minister and that that was all about who should shape up best to take the leadership forward or which candidate had the biggest block of votes for the leadership. That, in itself, is astonishing.

Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Col Holt; Hon Darren West; Hon Helen Morton; Hon
Kate Doust

Then there is the call to arms of a state conference. In an election year, we can understand a party using a state conference to have a call to arms and we would expect vigorous and rigorous debate and attacks on the opposition and the call to say, “Come on, folks, we’ve got to get behind the team and move forward.” The Premier made some comments about integrity. That was reported in two ways. Some of the public reports say that it was directed at the Labor Party, trying to drag the issues back to the Labor Party of 35 years ago and all the people who were somehow involved with Brian Burke and that sort of thing.

Hon Helen Morton: Not that long ago.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I look forward to members opposite making their contribution—except one, I have to say.

Hon Helen Morton interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon SUE ELLERY: It is not unreasonable that that was what the Premier was trying to do, except, of course, some people at that state conference chose to tell the media that it was directed at Mr Nalder and his connections.

The Premier was seeking to build into the subtext a shot across the bow at Mr Nalder and his leadership aspirations. I suspect the Premier shares the view of many others that every time Mr Nalder adds to his denial qualifications such as, “I have no plans to challenge at this point”, or, “Right now as the situation stands, I have no plans to do X”, he keeps the story going. Even when the Premier tried to generate support in the hearts and minds of his supporters at the state conference, some people in his own team chose to release to the media that it was a dig at Mr Nalder. That kind of dysfunctionality raises the question: how can they work together properly as a cabinet team when the minister with one of the largest and most politically contentious portfolios, Transport, constantly feels he needs to say that he is being undermined? How can they be functioning properly as a government if that is the case?

I will use my last one and a half minutes to canvass a bit more what the National Party has said about how this government can go forward. How can the only National Party minister who said that he disagreed with the new Minister for Housing’s analysis that the Premier could not win, the budget was a dud and there was no economic plan, be Terry Redman? How can it be the case that other National Party ministers have not said that they do not share that view? I call on those National Party members in the house today to stand here now and say, “That’s not our view. We disagree that this Premier can’t win the election, we disagree that the last budget was a dud and we disagree that there is no economic plan.” I invite them to stand up now and show what the leader of the government in here said the other day, which is that they are all one big happy family, they think this Premier can lead them successfully to the next election, they think the last budget was a good budget and they think there is a sound economic plan that is clear for everyone to see going forward. I invite them to do that and I look forward to that. In the absence of them saying that today when they are invited to do so, they perpetuate the image that they too share our view that this Premier cannot win the next election, that the budget is a dud and that they have no economic plan. If they fail to stand up today and refute those views, they are supporting us.

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Leader of the House) [10.38 am]: What a wonderful motion this one is! At the outset, if we read this at face value, it could so easily refer to the previous two Labor governments. It would have nothing to do with the current government, but refer to the previous two Labor governments. Let us do a little bit of compare and contrast because this is what this is all about. We are talking about —

... dysfunctional relationships within the government and resulting disruption to the processes of good government and its adverse effect on the confidence of the Western Australian people in their government.

I think members opposite need to look in the mirror, because I can tell them right now that is exactly what the two previous Labor governments delivered to the people of Western Australia, and that is exactly why the people of Western Australia turfed them out. Can I just remind members —

Hon Sue Ellery interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I did not open my mouth when Hon Sue Ellery spoke and I would appreciate the same respect.

Hon Sue Ellery: Somebody else did.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes, but I did not.

Let us look at the 1980s. Those who were around in the 1980s will remember very vividly what happened in the 1980s. Let me read a couple of pieces from the royal commission report. It states —

Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Col Holt; Hon Darren West; Hon Helen Morton; Hon
Kate Doust

The Commission has found conduct and practices on the part of certain persons involved in government in the period from 1983 to 1989 which were such as to place our governmental system at risk.

Further on it states —

Some ministers elevated personal or party advantage over their constitutional obligation to act in the public interest. The decision to lend Government support to the rescue of Rothwells in October 1987 was principally that of Mr Burke as Premier. Mr Burke's motives in supporting the rescue were not related solely to proper governmental concerns. They derived in part from his well-established relationship with Mr Connell, the chairman and major shareholder of Rothwells, and from his desire to preserve the standing of the Australian Labor Party in the eyes of those sections of the business community from which it had secured much financial support.

...

Subsequently, Mr Dowding, as Premier, presided over a disastrous series of decisions designed to support Rothwells when it was or should have been clear to him and to those ministers closely involved that Rothwells was no longer a viable financial institution. This culminated in the decision to involve the Government, through WAGH, in the Kwinana petrochemical project as a means of removing the Government's contingent liability for certain of the debts of Rothwells. Electoral advantage was preferred to the public interest.

I repeat —

Electoral advantage was preferred to the public interest.

Hon Kate Doust interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon PETER COLLIER: It continues —

Personal associations and the manner in which electoral contributions were obtained could only create the public perception that favour could be bought, that favour would be done.

Is it not unsurprising that they were turfed out! Let us look at the litany of failures of ministers in that period—Arthur Tonkin, Terry Burke, Peter Dowding, David Parker, Julian Grill, Jeff Carr, Pam Buchanan —

Point of Order

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I do not understand the relevance to the motion. The motion that Hon Sue Ellery put on the notice paper refers to this government; it does not refer to governments of 30 years ago. I ask you, Madam Acting President, to ensure that the speaker speaks to the motion.

Several members interjected.

THE ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Liz Behjat): Order! There is a point of order being taken in front of the Chair. It is the Chair who determines points of order, not other members of this house. What I will say to Hon Stephen Dawson is that there is no point of order. I am reading the motion and it says —

That this house notes the dysfunctional relationships within the government, the resulting disruption to the processes of good government and its adverse effect on the confidence of the Western Australian people in their government.

It does not refer to an actual government. I am sure that the Leader of the House is going to put some context to it by referencing this government, but there is no reference to which government we are talking about.

Debate Resumed

Hon PETER COLLIER: Thank you, Madam Acting President.

Yes, let us go on. There was Julian Grill, Jeff Carr, Pam Buchanan, Gavan Troy, Bob Pearce, Bill Thomas and Keith Wilson. This was a government in dysfunction. Is it any wonder that the public of Western Australia turfed them out?

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon PETER COLLIER: Let us move forward and look at how dysfunctional the last Labor government was. Let us look at how good it was or how dysfunctional it was and see whether members opposite really can point the finger at the current government. Let us look at these people—Bob Kucera, John D'Orazio, Norm Marlborough, Tony McRae, John Bowler —

Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Col Holt; Hon Darren West; Hon Helen Morton; Hon
Kate Doust

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon Alanna Clohesy: This is outrageous.

Hon PETER COLLIER: No, it is not outrageous at all; it is absolute fact.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon PETER COLLIER: Apart from Bob Kucera, who resigned regarding a minor conflict of interest, all other sackings involved the Corruption and Crime Commission. What we are dealing with here is a group of people who simply cannot face the truth. They cast aspersions about this government and how supposedly dysfunctional it is when, with all due respect, they have absolutely no moral high ground at all. Not long after the last state election, Hon Sally Talbot resigned from the front bench. From what I understand, Labor is about to lose one of its best performers, I have got to say. I hope that is not the case, but from what I understand, it is Hon Ken Travers. A third of the front bench has gone.

Hon Darren West: That is cheap.

Hon PETER COLLIER: No, it is not. That is absolutely true. I hope it is not true.

Hon Ken Travers: The difference is that you sacked a third of your front bench or more.

Hon PETER COLLIER: No.

Hon Ken Travers: You got rid of them because they were incompetent and you replaced them with idiots.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Good try!

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon PETER COLLIER: Let us look at this so-called dysfunctional former government. Let us look back to August 2008 —

Hon Kate Doust: You are never able to take responsibility for your failures.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Do you mind?

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon PETER COLLIER: A state election was called in August 2008. It was an opportunistic call by Alan Carpenter. Ljil and Eric were up sunning themselves in Onslow on the beach; they were members of the front bench. No-one knew about it. Is that a government that is in control? Of course not! They were up north getting a suntan. Two significant members of the front bench did not even know about it. No-one knew about it. Of course, once again the public of Western Australia saw it for what it was—opportunism and dysfunction. As a direct result of that, they snatched defeat from the jaws of victory. That government honestly thought that it could swan in. There is complacency at the moment; there is nonsense and hearsay. For 20 minutes there was the smoke and mirrors about who said this and who said what. Let us look at the latest endeavour on the part of members opposite. We saw a purported leadership spill from members opposite earlier this year.

Hon Kate Doust: No, there wasn't.

Hon PETER COLLIER: There was not! That is right. I apologise; there was not. Stephen Smith woke up one morning —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order, members on my left!

Hon PETER COLLIER: Thank you, Madam Acting President. Let us face the facts. Stephen Smith acted unilaterally. No-one spoke to him. Imagine this: he was getting his orange juice one morning and said to himself, "You know what I think I will do today? I think I'll take over the leadership of the Labor Party. That is what I will do. I'll just do it. I'll act alone. No-one will have spoken to me. Let's just call a press conference." So he rocked up like "Nigel No Friends" by himself and decided that he would take on the Labor leadership. Give me a break! Here is a man with an accomplished and very respected political career. Does anyone in this chamber honestly think that Stephen Smith woke up that morning and said to his wife, "I think I'll take on the leadership of the Labor Party"? Of course not. He was egged on by some members, either opposite in this chamber or opposite in the other chamber.

Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Col Holt; Hon Darren West; Hon Helen Morton; Hon
Kate Doust

Hon Kate Doust: No-one here and no-one down there.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Okay, so he did act by himself! Having said that, we heard all the nonsense and there was smoke and mirrors about leadership challenges et cetera. Of course in any political party there are going to be people who are ambitious towards the leadership. Politics is inherently tribal. It is inherently a vehicle for people with ambition to seek political office. I would doubt that there is anyone in this chamber who does not seek high political office—that there is anyone who does not aspire to be a minister. If not, I wonder why they are here. To get to that peak where one can really make —

Hon Ken Travers: I will put my hand up, sir.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Aside from one notable exception. I will have plenty to say about the honourable member if it is true, but I will say that I think it is a travesty that Hon Ken Travers was never ultimately a minister.

Let us look at where we are at the moment. Members opposite have become very smug and arrogant lately. They keep talking about dysfunction and how badly the Western Australian public thinks of the current government. Let us look at the federal election, when we were going to be decimated because Labor put the so-called unpopular, unelectable Colin Barnett on their advertising paraphernalia. They actually morphed Colin Barnett with Malcolm Turnbull and said, “That’ll do it. All the public of Western Australia will vote against the Liberal Party now.” Let us look at the two-party preferred vote in Western Australia. It was the best in the nation at 55–45. I tell you what, guys, there is going to have to be a hell of a lot of Western Australians voting Labor who voted Liberal in the federal election. Members opposite have been so smug and arrogant for the last 12 months. They had better hope that a hell of a lot of Western Australians are going to change their votes. The vote was 55–45. Labor’s primary vote was around 33 per cent. They are going to have to get a hell of a lot —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order! Members, your interjections are in no way going to be heard or put into *Hansard* when there are so many of you doing it at the one time. As the President said earlier, interjections can sometimes add to the debate. The rabble I am hearing at the moment does not add to the debate. *Hansard* needs to be able to take down the words that are being said. Leader of the House.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Thank you, Madam Acting President.

Members opposite had better hope that a lot of Western Australians are going to vote Labor in eight months’ time, or six months’ time now, when they voted Liberal back on 2 July, because that vote must have been devastating for the Labor Party. To sit on 55–45 certainly would have been disappointing as far as the Labor Party was concerned.

I have got rid of this myth of dysfunction. People are carrying on about the so-called break in the alliance between the National Party and the Liberal Party. We are still here and we will still be here in March 2017. Of course, the National Party and the Liberal Party are different parties; we are in alliance. One thing we have in that alliance is a mutual respect for that capacity —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon PETER COLLIER: They do not like hearing the truth, Madam Acting President. They really do not. They do not mind throwing it; they just do not like receiving it.

Mutual respect has existed and will continue to exist; it is called an alliance. As I go back to that point, politics is inherently tribal, and we will always have differences of opinion. We would not be a political party if we did not have ideology, and if we did not have ideological differences on occasions, we may as well go fishing and give the game away. But we do not and that is why after almost eight years—because we got that additional eight months—Western Australia is a much better place than the rubbish the previous administration left us with. Just have a look in my area alone, in education. Education was a disaster under the last Labor government. Let us look at what I inherited: the lowest-paid teachers in the nation. The so-called party for the workers, the party for teachers in education, had the lowest-paid teachers in the nation. In 2008, 264 classrooms were without a teacher. The Labor government spent hundreds of thousands of dollars going off to Ireland, England and the United States trying to recruit teachers.

Hon Kate Doust: That is what you have done. You have done the same thing!

Hon PETER COLLIER: No, it had nothing to do with recruiting teachers.

Several members interjected.

Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Col Holt; Hon Darren West; Hon Helen Morton; Hon
Kate Doust

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon PETER COLLIER: It was regarding a workforce for the mining sector. I was training minister, not education minister; get your facts right.

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order! Perhaps if the Leader of the House could address his comments through the Chair and not direct them to members opposite, we might get through it.

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Hon Ken Travers is wrong there, I can assure him—100 per cent wrong.

Teachers were the lowest paid in the nation. For the so-called party of workers, there was a massive teacher shortage and a curriculum that was an absolute mess. We were an embarrassment to education in the nation.

Let us move on to eight years later, with the highest-paid teachers in the nation by far. Every year that we have been in office we put a teacher in front of every classroom. We have the best-resourced schools of any state in the nation by far. No other state comes close to us by far. At last, we have recognised the most marginalised members of our community and funded them appropriately. We provided another \$46 million for students with a disability just this year. That is direct funding for Aboriginal students, students with a disability and those who speak English as a second language. We provided direct funding for those who live in the regions and in low socioeconomic areas. This government has provided sanity to education and that is exactly why more and more members of the Western Australian public are choosing public education than ever before; it is a direct result of good government. In addition, we have provided care for the vulnerable as a result of the unity that we have in good governance of our government. Some of the most marginalised members of our community have received increased funding. Since 2008, we have increased funding for social services, with an 84 per cent increase to mental health services to \$866 million, an 81 per cent increase to child protection and family support to \$640 million and a 117 per cent increase to the disability services to \$945 million. This is from a government that is unified and has direction and vision, and is providing for all Western Australians.

We have rebuilt the health system with a \$7 billion health asset program that has modernised WA's healthcare system with world-class new hospitals such as Fiona Stanley Hospital, Midland Public Hospital, Albany Hospital, Hedland Health Campus and the Perth Children's Hospital. Major redevelopments also include Joondalup Health Campus and Busselton Hospital, Kalgoorlie Health Campus and a program of improved services from regional areas. We have revitalised the city and injected a new vibrancy into it, including, as I mentioned the other day, the development of Elizabeth Quay, Perth City Link, upgrading the Perth Cultural Centre, building the Perth Stadium, which is due to open in 2017, and the new Museum. It is all go in Western Australia. The approach has been multifaceted and a direct result of the unity of this government. It has been visionary and it has delivered. That is exactly why I am confident that the public of Western Australia will re-elect this government in March next year.

Before I conclude my comments, I will allude to something I mentioned in question time two days ago: in 2008, we went into the election without doubt as the underdog. The previous Labor government faced a litany of issues, such as the Corruption and Crime Commission investigations and the sacking of ministers, and the public of Western Australia chose us. They chose us because we promised to deliver, and that is exactly what we have done. We put a very compelling advertisement to the public of Western Australia. We asked the public of Western Australia to name three things that the Labor Party had done in its term of government and then we had an empty screen on the television, because no-one in Western Australia knew what it had done for the previous seven years. They could not name three things. Now, after eight years in government, ask the public to name 20 things in Western Australia that the government has done and they will not have any problems whatsoever, because we have delivered. We have been a united, visionary government and I am confident as a result of that unity and vision we will be re-elected come 11 March, 2017.

HON KEN TRAVERS (North Metropolitan) [10.55 am]: I was inspired by the Leader of the House to get up and make a comment. I had to ask my colleagues whether I could jump ahead of them this morning, because I want to make a couple of comments.

Hon Peter Collier: Is this your valedictory?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: No, I will make a statement to the house later this evening. I am responding to the comments the Leader of the House just made, suggesting there was dysfunction on this side. We need to put that into context at the very beginning.

We raised the issue of dysfunction. There is a whole history and litany of examples of dysfunction going on in the government at the moment, and we received a perfect deflection—media training 101—from the

Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Col Holt; Hon Darren West; Hon Helen Morton; Hon
Kate Doust

Leader of the House: do not actually address the core issues. The core issue is that the new Leader of the National Party said this government cannot win with the current Premier. He said that not two years ago or two months ago, but just a couple of weeks ago. That is what he said. He said this government cannot win and it needs to change its leader. Hon Peter Collier had to give a lecture and threaten his Whip's position when he went out and said that the government cannot win and he might have to think about changing the leader. Hon Nigel Hallett just completely gave up on the government and now sits on this side of the house. He is the most honourable man in the Liberal Party because he does not sit there and mislead people; he just tells it as it is. He came to this side of the chamber because he did not want to be on the *Titanic*, as did Rob Johnson. Rob Johnson said, "I'm getting out of here; I'm leaving this place." If we want to talk about dysfunction, how close was the vote on the weekend about whether Hon Peter Katsambanis should go down to Hillarys or whether he should stay? Hon Peter Collier tried to bring me and Hon Sally Talbot into the debate in some way. I have to tell you, mate, I will be campaigning to get Labor members elected. I am really proud of the fact that many of my former staff will be playing integral roles in the upcoming election campaign as candidates, state secretaries and the chief policy wonk to the Leader of the Opposition. I am really proud that I have been able to find and assist good, smart people to get involved in politics, and I have to tell members that I will be out there doing everything I can to ensure Labor wins at the next election. I do not think the members on the other side can say the same about theirs.

Hon Helen Morton: I reckon most of your team has just walked out on you.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: This morning I had a conversation with my team. I know exactly how my team feel about me, member, and I got a lot more emotion out of them. The former minister would get emotion out of her team, but for very different reasons. The emotions would be happiness and joy in the member's caucus. That was not the emotion of my colleagues this morning when I had a private chat with them. I really appreciate that and their understanding of my personal position of why I want to do what I am going to do and that I will make that announcement when I am ready to do it. But do not forget there is dysfunction in this government.

Was Hon Peter Collier not a member of the constitutional monarchists?

Hon Peter Collier: I still am.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Why would a constitutional monarchist absolutely trash the Westminster system of government in this state? That is what Hon Peter Collier is doing. Go and read it. I thought it was really funny when Hon Peter Collier finally tabled his section 82 certificates. All the Liberal members who put them in first, put at the end of it, "We cannot give you cabinet documents because there is an issue called cabinet solidarity." When Colin Holt was still a minister, he forgot to put that bit into his section 82 certificate. You did not mention cabinet solidarity. You were trashing it with your mates!

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Liz Behjat): Order! Can I remind the member on his feet that his remarks are to be directed through the Chair and not directly across the chamber. I also remind the member about the use of the word "you" and a person's first name. If you refer to another member, it is Hon Col Holt. I would prefer it if all those remarks came through the Chair.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Hon Col Holt did not want to include the bit about cabinet solidarity; he did not include it! He understood that there is no cabinet solidarity! Westminster traditions are being trashed! The shining light of constitutional monarchists in Western Australia is part of it. Can members believe that? Constitutional monarchists are trashing our very system of government. There are two types of government. The Leader of the House was a politics lecturer so he would understand that there are two types of government. There are coalition and minority governments. The National Party could give the Liberal Party support for supply and sit outside the cabinet and do what it is doing, which has won its own agenda—its own big tax agenda.

The problem with the National Party and the Liberal Party is that they have a spending addiction. Their solution for dealing with their addiction is to get more for their addiction and find more money to spend. The finances of the state will not be fixed if members opposite continue to feed their addiction. That is what Brendon Grylls' great new tax is about; he is feeding his spending addiction. It is not about addressing his addiction; it is about feeding it. It will also feed the Premier's spending addiction. That will not fix the state's finances; it will make them worse! A drug addict who gets more drugs does not get fixed; they get worse. That is what we have with this government. The Leader of the House tried to talk about Stephen Smith. Can members name a single member of the current Parliament who supported Stephen Smith earlier this year? I had never even spoken to him before he announced his campaign; I had never had a conversation with him about it! The Leader of the House tried to deflect by talking about everything else. He did not talk about the fundamental

Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Col Holt; Hon Darren West; Hon Helen Morton; Hon
Kate Doust

structural problems. A war is being fought out around policy, and not just policy about who has the better railway line between the Treasurer and the Minister for Transport. One of the great things I love about the Liberal Party is that it fights about which transport policy it might build, and even when it finally resolves which one it will build, it never does it. I do not know why it wastes its time and energy because it will never build one of them. Why would the Liberal Party spend even a moment in its cabinet talking about which is the better project to build when we all know that it will never do it? It will never do it! Members opposite promised the railway line to Yanchep. Where is it? They made many promises about public transport and they have not delivered on them. We understand that it is a proxy war about the future leadership. Transport is a good one to choose if they want a proxy war because they know that the final decision will not change anything. If the Labor Party has a policy debate, it is because it is having a policy debate. Good political parties should have robust policy debates. However, cabinet ministers are fighting out the debate for members opposite. The National Party's disease of undermining cabinet solidarity has now spread to the ministers: the Minister for Transport, the Treasurer and the Whip, Hon Nigel Hallett. He has not left just the Liberal Party; he has now left the chamber! We know that Hon Jim Chown does not like the National Party; he never has, and good on him for not liking the National Party. Rob Johnson summed it up perfectly the other day. He knows what goes on because he has been in their party room. Hon Jim Chown hates the National Party and—guess what?—they hate him!

We are a united team. The Leader of the House cannot come in here and tell me that we are somehow not united. I want to see these people as ministers after the next election. Even if I am not in this place, I assure members that I will do everything in my personal power to make sure that they are all ministers, parliamentary secretaries, the member for Morley or whatever they aspire to be—presidents, maybe. There are lots of roles for them all. I know that they will do a great job. Each and every one of them will do an absolutely fantastic job. There is no disunity on this side of the chamber. We are a united team, working our backsides off for one reason and one reason only: the people of Western Australia deserve a government that is for them. I say to the people of Western Australia that a future Labor government will be a government for them. It will be a good government and it will get on with dealing with the mess. We talk about governments leaving messes. The general government sector net debt figure that members opposite will leave is the biggest problem that any government has left for a future government. Christian Porter could see it coming and he got out; he went because he knew what the problem would be. I hold Mark McGowan and Ben Wyatt in absolutely high regard for the fact that they still want to be Premier and Treasurer of the state despite the pressures that will be on them because of the mess members opposite will leave. The dysfunction of members opposite adds to it because they cannot resolve decisions, so they just spend more and more. That is the problem of the dysfunction on their side. The Leader of the House did not address any of those issues about dysfunction. He did not even talk about Brendon Grylls' statement that they cannot win with the current Premier, because he wanted to avoid the truth; he cannot handle the truth.

HON COL HOLT (South West — Parliamentary Secretary) [11.05 am]: I want to talk just a little bit. This has been a wideranging debate and it has covered a lot of ground, most of it around partners in government and a little bit about the Nationals and what has happened to our party in the last few weeks. We have worked with our partners in government for eight years now. Yes, it is a different model from what has occurred in the past; it is an alliance model—a power-sharing arrangement that recognises —

Several members interjected.

Hon COL HOLT: I will get to that in a minute. It is a power-sharing arrangement that recognises that both parties have a role in government. The arrangement has operated very, very well for the last eight years. I want to go back to some other models that other states have adopted. Victoria is a great example. At the moment there is a coalition in opposition between the Liberal Party and the National Party. They were in government for a year. The coalition model did not hold them in that great a stead and they found themselves in opposition. There is also the merged model in Queensland, where the Liberal Party and the National Party joined and held government for one term. I think that they reduced the opposition to seven members at the time. When the election came along, there was a complete flip around. Those models have not delivered even in those states. Our alliance model has delivered for the people of Western Australia for the last eight years. Opposition members say that there is no such thing. You guys were not around in 2008 but I was, and I can tell members opposite that the Premier at the time, Alan Carpenter, came and begged the National Party to join him in an alliance government. He was desperate to hold on to power and he desperately offered all sorts of trinkets to the National Party to form an alliance government with the National Party. Do members opposite not remember that? None of the members who are left in the chamber were even here. Do members know that he was prepared to enter into an alliance government with the National Party to deliver our signature policy to make sure that he held government? That is part of our history back in 2008, and we are still doing it.

Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Col Holt; Hon Darren West; Hon Helen Morton; Hon
Kate Doust

We have a history of eight years of delivering good government in Western Australia and delivering outstanding outcomes to regional Western Australia based on the policy that we brought to the 2008 election. In spite of the motion, I feel that we can have our differences as a minor party—we can have our differences with our partners in government—because of the strength of the relationship; that is the whole point. Many relationships, leaderships and partnerships fail because they do not have a strong relationship. We can bring our own ideas to the table and we can have disagreements, but does that mean we bring down government when we have a disagreement? No. We have a strong relationship and we work through the issues. We continue to deliver for the people of Western Australia. We have some great examples of this. We had a disagreement on local government reform. We did not agree with amalgamations and we stated that. We made our points both in this Parliament and outside it. The sale of Fremantle port is another issue that we do not agree with. Has it brought down the government because we have different policy position or a disagreement? No, it has not at all. That is based on the strength of our relationship. For 95 per cent of the time we agree on things, and that is what we should be doing. We should be agreeing on the things that we need to, but we should have different policy positions and ideas when we need to as well. We are a National Party; we represent regional Western Australia. From Wyndham to Esperance, we represent regional Western Australia, which has a diverse range of issues and a diverse range of challenges, so of course we need a diverse range of policy settings to address those. They may well be very different from what happens in other regions or in metropolitan Perth, but we will not shy away from the fact that we need to introduce or bring ideas to Parliament or public debate that delivers different outcomes for the people of Western Australia. That is our role. That is the role of any political party that brings ideas based on their ideology into debate in this house. When that party is in government, that does not go away. The fact that we have differences of opinion around the table means that we need to work on a solution that delivers, and that is based on the strength of the relationship. A great example is the work that was begun by Minister Morton and then by Minister Mitchell with Minister Redman as the regional development minister. There was obviously a united approach to regional remote reform, which is absolutely needed out there. It is two different parties working together to bring about solutions while they are in government with the aim of delivering for people in those remote communities. We are a separate party. We represent regional Western Australia and we will always bring different debates to this house.

I go back to some points around the upcoming election and the stance from the new Leader of the National Party. I was in cabinet when the budget was agreed to. I agreed to the budget; I absolutely agreed to it. It was a budget that was brought down to take to the next election. The new Leader of the National Party has brought forward a new policy and a new idea and we put it out in debate, as we should.

Hon Darren West: It's not an idea, it's stupidity.

Hon COL HOLT: You said that about royalties for regions, mate.

Hon Darren West: No, I didn't.

Hon COL HOLT: Yes, Hon Darren West did. His party said it would never agree —

Hon Stephen Dawson: Did he say it or did his party say it? You're making stuff up.

Hon COL HOLT: His party said it.

Hon Stephen Dawson: You pointed out that he said it; he never said that. We are regional members, too. We support royalties for regions.

Hon COL HOLT: I am going to make a point now. We brought forward an idea back in 2006–07 and no political party, including the Labor Party, agreed to it except the Nationals. The Labor Party never agreed to it—never. It said, “No, we do not agree with that policy setting. We will not agree to it.” Guess what happened in —

Hon Darren West: We supported the legislation.

Hon COL HOLT: I know, and that is the point I am trying to make. In 2008, there was suddenly a big turnaround when the National Party had the balance of power. The Labor Party wanted to form government and said that it would agree to royalties for regions. We have brought through a new idea in order to have a debate, a discussion and throw up some ideas that we think will help Western Australia and the people of Western Australia. That is what this is about—bringing new ideas to discuss and debate. One day the Labor Party might have an idea that it might bring into this place to debate and discuss how the Labor Party might move this great state forward. That is what we are doing. We are not shying away from the fact that we want to bring new ideas into debate, and we will continue to do so. We will continue to work with our partners in government because it has been a good relationship that has delivered for all Western Australians up until today.

Hon Stephen Dawson: Do you agree with your leader's statements on the mining tax?

Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Col Holt; Hon Darren West; Hon Helen Morton; Hon
Kate Doust

Hon COL HOLT: We have formulated it as a policy. We are taking this as a policy and a discussion into the next election because we want to take this great state forward.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I go back to the comment I made right at the beginning of this debate. A constructive interjection is fine, but when a chorus comes in behind that interjection, it destroys the debate. Hon Colin Holt.

Hon COL HOLT: I think I have finished, thank you, Mr President.

HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural) [11.14 am]: I would like to make some remarks on this excellent motion moved by Hon Sue Ellery that notes the dysfunctional relationships within the government. I want to touch mostly on the second part of the motion about the resulting disruption to the processes of good government and its adverse effect on the confidence of the Western Australian people in their government. I think those last few words are perhaps the crux of this motion. This is the worst government in Western Australian history. Even the Leader of the House did not deny the dysfunction. He gave us a history lesson about previous governments going back 30 years. I think that typifies the problem in that the government does not seem to care what the people of Western Australia think about it and it will not listen. Therein lies a major part of the problem with the Barnett coalition government. Can I reiterate something? I know that the Leader of the House was formerly a politics teacher and that he knows better than to bring in the term “alliance government”. I know that even some senior members of the media are starting to cotton on to this term and that somehow we have an alliance government in Western Australia. Under the British Westminster system by which we operate, there can only be two types of governments between two parties—a minority government in which there are no members of the second party present in the cabinet and a coalition government in which there are members of the second party present in the cabinet. That is what we have in Western Australia. We have a coalition government between the Liberal Party and the National Party, because there are three cabinet ministers from the National Party in the government. I think that needs to be clarified once and for all. Under the British Westminster system, there is no such thing as an alliance government. There can be an alliance arrangement outside of government between parties, there can be an alliance arrangement in other forms, but this motion specifically refers to the government, and in government there is only a coalition or a minority government between two parties. We have a coalition, so let us get that straight and clear right from the start. The media listening or anybody reading *Hansard* will know now —

Several members interjected.

Hon DARREN WEST: Let us get some clarification. If members do not take my word for it, an eminent professor or expert in the field of politics will tell them what I have just told the house.

Hon Peter Collier: No, they will not.

Hon DARREN WEST: They will.

Hon Peter Collier interjected.

Hon DARREN WEST: I sat in relative quiet through Leader of the House’s contribution and I am sure he could pass that response on to somebody else.

Let us just be very clear about the coalition for a start. Within the coalition government of two parties, there are serious divisions and they played out in the last week and a half for all to see. When the new leader of one of the parties in the coalition called the budget a dud and no-one stood up to refute that assessment, I think it can be taken by the people of Western Australia, whom we all ultimately work for and represent, that the budget is a dud. I think everyone would agree with the new Leader of the National Party about that. It is sad for Hon Colin Holt that he was part of that process, but he has not broken ranks to say he does not agree with the leader, so we can only presume by that that he agrees with that position.

We have a downturn of unprecedented size. I sadly see today that the unemployment rate in Western Australia has risen from 5.7 per cent to 6.3 per cent. That is 8 200 people who no longer have a job as a consequence of the government’s mismanagement of the state. That is 8 200 families who have lost their breadwinner and will suffer as a consequence. That is the type of thing that we are talking about here. We are talking about people and their perception of their government, and it cannot be good. We have lost our AAA credit rating. We have unprecedented levels of debt. The “State of the States” has us down at the bottom of the list with South Australia and Tasmania, which have far more challenging economic environments than ours. We are going to drop to the bottom of that list if the parties in government cannot sort themselves out and work together as a coalition government for the people of Western Australia, because they are most important in all of this. It is about that

Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Col Holt; Hon Darren West; Hon Helen Morton; Hon
Kate Doust

last line of the motion, “the confidence of the Western Australian people in the government”. I spend a lot of time talking to people, as we all do, and I come across —

Hon Simon O’Brien: I feel very sorry for those people.

Hon DARREN WEST: I thank Hon Simon O’Brien. They choose to speak to me and they choose to speak to others, and their confidence in their level of government has never been lower. As a consequence, we saw at the federal election a drop in support for both major parties and an increase in support for other political parties. The vote for the Liberal, National and Labor Parties is at low levels historically speaking. People are turning their backs on those three parties because they can form government. I can only presume from that that confidence in the parties that govern is diminishing. Certainly, that is the case in Western Australia. We saw a collapse in the vote for the National Party at the last federal election, and I would link that directly to poor performance in government. People are losing faith in their government. People should be proud of their government, and people should be happy to live in a democracy in a place like Western Australia where they can be represented by ordinary people who put themselves forward as candidates. But that public confidence is being eroded by this poor government. It is a very interesting point. The dysfunction within the coalition is one thing, but the dysfunction between the parties in the coalition is another. How can political parties govern this state when they cannot even organise themselves, when they cannot even work together within their own political organisations, and cannot work harmoniously together as a coalition?

I take the case of Fremantle port, raised by Hon Col Holt, as a good example. National Party members, in their roles as ministers in the coalition government, passed the budget, which locked in the proceeds of the sale of Fremantle port. Then National Party members went outside the Parliament and said that they did not support the sale of Fremantle port. They support the income that the sale will generate, but they do not support the sale. That is utter dysfunction and chaotic government. The government cannot have it both ways. The parties are either in it together with the sale of the port, and working together collegially as a government in the interests of Western Australia, or they are not. The time for the National Party to object was at the time of the budget, when the money was being allocated to try to prop up the worst budget in Western Australia’s history—a \$4 billion deficit in Western Australia, the darling of the Australian economic community. We have seen the biggest mining boom ever in Australian history. Government revenues have never been higher.

Now we have a plan from one quarter—I call it a quarter, because it is half of the National Party, which is half of the government—to tax BHP Billiton and Rio Tinto out of Western Australia. The plan is to tax them \$5 a tonne of iron ore, at a time when Rio has just announced an \$8.2 billion loss.

Hon Col Holt: BHP.

Hon DARREN WEST: I am terribly sorry. Hon Col Holt is quite correct; BHP has just announced it, but the important point of this is the \$8.2 billion loss. Now the National Party has announced a plan to tax that company an additional \$5 a tonne. I just mentioned the unemployment rate. BHP and Rio have sent emails to their employees saying that this slug will threaten their jobs. That is what it will do, and that is why the government needs to stop talking about a \$5 a tonne tax on BHP and Rio. To change from an ad valorem mining royalty to a fixed mining royalty may be a topic of debate at some point in the future, but when these companies are losing \$8 billion a year in Western Australia, and informing their staff that there may be job losses as a consequence of these changes, we need to stop talking about that immediately. We need to work with business and industry in Western Australia to try to create jobs.

Members might have noticed the leader of the united, single-party opposition moving around the state, including regional Western Australia. I take some umbrage at the notion that the National Party represents regional Western Australia. It is fair to say that every party here represents regional Western Australia. I certainly do, as a Labor Party member. We have Liberal members, Greens members and Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party members from regional areas. For one party to say that it is the only party that represents regional Western Australia is misleading, and the Nationals should stop saying that, because I do not know how well they are doing that at the moment.

There is a lot more that I could say. I tweeted before I made this speech that I was about to give an address on Liberal–National government dysfunction, and I did not need to do any research. I had a little bit here, but I have not had to use any research. I will just make a very localised point. In Geraldton, we have a Liberal member of the Legislative Assembly, and we have a National Party upper house member, Hon Paul Brown, who is challenging him at the next state election. The bickering and arguing between those two members of Parliament, who are in a coalition government together, is something to behold. The people of Geraldton, as a consequence, do not have stage 2 of their hospital, a mental health unit or a 138-bed Aboriginal hostel. We have lost the help of our midwest members. It is time to work together and govern for Western Australia.

Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Col Holt; Hon Darren West; Hon Helen Morton; Hon
Kate Doust

HON HELEN MORTON (East Metropolitan) [11.24 am]: I am really disappointed that we have wasted an inordinate amount of the time of this Parliament on this absolutely ridiculous motion based on absolutely nothing. How bad it is for the opposition to bring on a motion like this that shows, despite everything it is trying to project onto the coalition—the alliance—government today, that the people of Western Australia still prefer us to govern. What does it say about the opposition? The opposition is absolutely fascinated and obsessed with these stories, innuendos and media reports, and what an incredible mob of hypocrites it is, wasting the time of this Parliament, when its own dysfunction was unprecedented by any other government in power, so much so that the precious time of the Parliament is wasted again in trying to make something out of absolutely nothing. There is no dysfunction in the government. There is a strong alliance between the Liberal Party and the National Party. People need to understand that it is the Barnett government. Here we go again—this absolutely massive collective projection —

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! About three members are interjecting, none of whom, I have noted, have actually risen to speak on this motion. They still have the opportunity, but they must do so within the bounds of the debate.

Hon HELEN MORTON: I understand why the opposition comes at this massive collective projection of its own inadequacy onto this other body of people. Members opposite cannot handle differing views and opinions, despite this being the most stable government anywhere in Australia over the past eight years. It is not the fault of opposition members, and I feel sorry for them, that they project their own inadequacies onto others. They do that subconsciously, and I understand that, because I have a good understanding about classic subconscious projection. It is as a result of the labour movement having, as its foundation, militant unionism. It is just how they are wired, and we fully understand that. Conformity at all costs —

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! Hansard has a difficult job at the best of times, but you must acknowledge that continuous interjections across the chamber make it impossible. That is one consideration, in conducting an orderly, respectful debate.

Hon HELEN MORTON: I understand that it is very difficult for opposition members to hear this, and how they cannot find it possible to work within a system in which people do not always conform 100 per cent. That is because militant unionism, which makes up the Labor Party, has as its basic foundation conformity and compliance at all costs, or you are out. After my trip to South Africa I am very clear about why I could never be a member of the Labor Party. That is because I came to realise that militant unionism is the modern form of slavery. Members have no choice and no options and must do as they are told and say what they are told to say. They must either comply and conform or they are out, or worse—they lose their job. Members could lose their job at preselection, just as Linda Savage did because she would not join a faction.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! I know you have heard it before, but even though you might not agree with what the member is saying and you might not like it, they have the right to say it and you have the obligation to listen, all on your own terms.

Hon HELEN MORTON: I am just explaining the modern form of slavery, which is militant unionism. Either Labor members join a faction or they will not get a portfolio, despite being an incredibly intelligent member. The member for Armadale is Tony Buti.

Hon Alanna Clohesy interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Hon Alanna Clohesy, do you want me to repeat what I just said? I do not think I need to.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Workers have to join a union or they will not get a contract or a job. Compulsory student unionism is dressed up as compulsory student fees. This is the modern form of slavery. It is very much an attempt to bring back slavery in disguise.

No wonder opposition members have differing views and differing ideas and see the broad church of liberalism as disruptive, when it is not. It is just different from the way they do business, but they cannot see it. I do not blame them for that because it is how their subconscious is wired. Competition and the strength of individualism are too hard for them to appreciate. I feel sorry that that is how it is for them. That is why they are in opposition and that is why the people of Western Australia want to keep them there.

The government has a record of being united and getting everything done. The arrangement with the Nationals is an alliance that works well. It allows us to have differences without it being dysfunctional. But members opposite cannot see it because, to them, it is the opposite of compliance and conformity. In their view, it is a coalition or nothing, and members have even said that today. That just points out how they cannot even begin

Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Col Holt; Hon Darren West; Hon Helen Morton; Hon
Kate Doust

to think outside that very narrow box that they operate in. Despite competition and individualism being part of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, self-actualisation is the highest point of achievement in his hierarchy of needs. Members opposite just do not get it, and I am sorry about that.

What evidence is there that the public has no confidence in our government? As Hon Peter Collier pointed out, it certainly did not show up in the last federal election results. It did not show up at the last opportunity that the people of Western Australia had to vote for the government that they wanted. They did not show that they had no confidence in this government. Members opposite tried everything. They tried to ram all sorts of negative messages at the population and it still did not work.

What do members want to know about the process of good government? Good government continues. Members opposite would not understand this, but about 30 ministers have moved through cabinet and in that time we have had the most amazing stability and the most amazing continuation of work —

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members!

Hon HELEN MORTON: There have been seven ministers on this side of the house, while one person on the other side of the house was a minister for 12 months before they were bundled out. We have had a change of Deputy Premier. How smooth was that?

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Members, you cannot just keep shouting interjections across the chamber. You have to let members have their say, and then it will be your turn.

Hon HELEN MORTON: We have processes in place, a government with integrity, a steady hand, leadership and robust structures that enable us to have the most stable government in the nation. It is an absolute privilege to be a part of this well-functioning, great alliance with the National Party, which allows us to govern for all of Western Australia. We have undertaken an unprecedented level of development and construction.

In the lead-up to this presentation, I went through all the different portfolios, but, unfortunately, I will not get through them all. I looked at education, where we are the best in the nation, our unprecedented development in health, the amazing work that is taking place in state development, and the excellent working environment that we debated yesterday. There is no portfolio that I am not proud to say belongs to this functional government.

HON KATE DOUST (South Metropolitan — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [11.35 am]: I am really pleased that Hon Helen Morton is happy to be part of a government that is going to fail. I listened to her comments and her interjections and those of some other members and I was trying to remember whether it was *Logan's Run* or *Fahrenheit 451* in which people in the community used to be fed this green product to keep them happy. I think that is what is happening on the other side of the chamber, because I have never heard so much nonsense in my life.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! Surely I do not have to go back to what I stated about five minutes ago. Every member has the opportunity to say what they like without unfair interruptions.

Hon KATE DOUST: What our leader has tried to put on the record today is that this government has demonstrated very clearly its dysfunction and chaos. We have seen members of its party defect to other parties. We are dealing with the dumped, the disaffected and the departed. We are dealing with two parties that cannot seem to work closely together. There has been a coup in the National Party in the last week and I hear that there is a brave new world and new policies have arisen. We have even seen members of the frontbench of the Liberal Party discounting this brave new idea already. The point that needs to be made is that if they cannot function as one, there are serious problems ahead for our state, and they have demonstrated that over the last eight years. I know they are all oblivious to it because of whatever they are being fed at the moment. Look at the AAA rating that has disappeared. Look at the debt and deficit. Look at what they are leaving ahead for the state. Look at the financial baggage they are leaving for us. We have to deal with the myth that the Liberal–National coalition has managed the finances badly.

Hon Simon O'Brien interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I have been in this chamber for a while and it is amazing to see the roles reversed. They sometimes flip from minute to minute across the chamber. If there is a change in government, that happens as well, so you hear the same arguments.

Hon Jim Chown: Is this your contribution to the motion!

The PRESIDENT: That is enough from me!

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.