

McGOWAN GOVERNMENT — PERFORMANCE

Motion

HON CHARLES SMITH (East Metropolitan) [10.25 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house takes note of the McGowan government's lack of transparency and accountability and its failure to deliver on election promises.

We have come to the end of another year. For some of us, we look at the new year with a sense of renewal and hope. Teachers around Western Australia are now busy doing their end-of-term reports and marking students with an A, B, C or D and so on. Of course, teachers now have to sugar-coat their reports in case parents get offended about how their sons and daughters are doing at school.

It is important that One Nation is able to give a critique of the government's performance this year. In light of the heavy criticism that One Nation received from the now government during the election campaign, it is only right that we now assess the government's performance. We now have a chance to offer the McGowan government an end-of-term appraisal. We have a chance as a house of review to ring alarm bells about the direction in which the government is taking us—or rather not taking us. I want members to remember this quote from the Premier —

The current approach of cheap slogans and ad-hoc responses isn't working.

That was intended as a criticism of the former government but I am concerned it is now a template for everything that this government does. In March this year, the government was declared the winner of the state election. The people of Western Australia elected the Labor government because they were fed up with the Barnett government. That government was going nowhere and we were all fed up with the Premier and the seeming arrogance that his government portrayed. Do not think for a minute that the people of Western Australia desperately wanted a Labor government; they just wanted that lot out, as we all did. They just wanted them out, so the Labor Party should not think that it got here on merit, because it did not.

Over the next three years, members on this side of the house will just have to take our medicine and put up with members opposite. The Liberal Party and the One Nation Party will just have to wait for three years because the Labor Party will be a one-term government.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Are you associated with the Liberal Party? Are you in alliance with them?

Hon CHARLES SMITH: I am saying the conservative side of politics. The Premier was so desperate for power that he promised everything to everybody. He made myriad promises. Reluctantly, the people of Western Australia gave the Labor Party a mandate to govern. That mandate was to deal with the debt and deficits, with the cost of living and to halt tax increases. It was to watch over our safety and deal with the scourge of ice, to increase job opportunities and foster economic growth and to stop the sale of state-owned assets. We are nearly at the end of the year. In that short period, the McGowan government has broken its mandate. As I mentioned in this place in my inaugural speech, a social contract is in contract between the government and the people. That contract, which has been spoken about by people such as Burke and Rousseau, has been put through the shredder. I will take household bills for example. Our seniors and pensioners have been targeted to pay more. A confidential report was given to the government that stated pensioners would be worse off under the government's hikes. Madam President, do you know what seniors and pensioners call the Labor government? It is the pensioner killers, because that is what will happen when the bills are hiked.

Let us examine what has happened. I got this information from the ABC, that fair bastion of unbiased reporting. There will be an increase of \$169 in fixed charges on electricity bills, or 10 per cent, to the representative household; a six per cent increase in fees for water, sewage and drainage; changes to public transport fares, which include a 1.8 per cent increase in standard fares on public transport; vehicle charges will increase by 5.5 per cent; and a 3.5 percentage increase in the emergency services levy. That is extraordinary. This government promised no new taxes. No sooner were these measures announced when the Treasurer stated in the media that every Western Australian needed to do their share to fix the budget. I will quote the Treasurer —

“We have had to make tough decisions to help get the budget under control and, unfortunately, the burden of those decisions needs to be shared across the community,” ...

If only that were true. The huge multinational companies that make super profits have not been asked to make a contribution, just the pensioners and the battlers. The little old gold industry out in the regions has been asked.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: We did ask the multinational goldminers.

Hon CHARLES SMITH: Has big iron ore been asked? No. Has big LNG been asked? No. It was just mums and dads.

Extract from Hansard

[COUNCIL — Thursday, 30 November 2017]

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Hon Charles Smith; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Tjorn Sibma; Hon Darren West; Hon Colin Holt; President; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon James Chown

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon CHARLES SMITH: Those most able to afford to make a contribution have not been asked. The government was sent a very strong message just this week and a few weeks ago about targeting the gold industry and further decimating regional Western Australia. The message was that it would not be acceptable. The government has now tried to do it again, after making a few cosmetic changes. That is incredible. The Leader of the Opposition has called members opposite an arrogant government and I am now inclined to believe him. Great leaders listen and make decisions. It is obvious that the Premier does not listen. I have told the Premier what needs to happen—where he needs to go to raise revenue. Hon Robin Scott has told him where to go, but he does not listen. Have the big banks been asked? No, they have not. Perhaps some multinationals are more equal than others. Perhaps those most able to contribute to budget repair are not being asked. I wonder why that is. It now appears, alarmingly, that WA Labor is transferring state energy assets to foreign corporations by stealth. Recent media reports state that some parts of Synergy have been privatised by stealth and they are now in foreign hands. That is wholly unacceptable to One Nation. A few days later, the Minister for Mines and Petroleum called me to ask me to support his ideas for a second gold tax. It is unbelievable. A key promise of the government was to stop the sale of any part of Western Power. As I just said, it sold part of Synergy to a European fund a few weeks ago. I will quote the Premier —

“Everyone knows that when you privatise State-owned utilities, power prices go up, and services go down.”

I am having a lot of trouble understanding Mr McGowan’s principles. Really, he is making One Nation look good. WA Labor says one thing, then it does another.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Do you understand that as part of that arrangement, the state actually becomes a part owner —

Hon CHARLES SMITH: That does not matter. The Labor Party was against privatisation, and it has gone ahead and done it.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon CHARLES SMITH: Members opposite say one thing, and they do another.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon CHARLES SMITH: Members opposite say one thing, then they do another. A party that campaigned on transparency and honesty gives away our assets to foreign owners. A party that campaigned on transparency directly interfered with the recruitment of a new Commissioner of Police, then it tried to cover it up. A party that campaigned on transparency failed to detect its own member’s fake medals and academic credentials. What a joke!

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: He’s been referred to the Procedure and Privileges Committee.

Hon CHARLES SMITH: Yes, I understand that; what a joke—dragged kicking and screaming.

The Premier was a vocal critic of the Barnett government, in effect, charging wealthy businessmen for private meetings. Shortly after getting into government, he was doing the same thing. Members opposite say one thing, then they do another.

Let us turn to the 1.5 per cent pay offer for police. As Nikita Khrushchev, a highly respected Communist hero in the Labor Party has previously said, politicians are the same the world over; they promise to build a bridge even when there is no river. For those who do not understand that quote, it means that politicians will say anything to get elected.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: You are a politician, so does that apply to you as well?

Hon CHARLES SMITH: It applies to professional politicians such as the minister.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: No, you are a professional politician; are you not getting paid? Are you not accepting your pay? What is the definition of a professional politician?

Hon CHARLES SMITH: Career politicians —

The PRESIDENT: Order! There will not be any more yelling in this chamber. There is no need for a point of order on this, Hon Michael Mischin. Hon Charles Smith has the call. Direct your comments to me and ignore any interjections.

Hon CHARLES SMITH: Thank you, Madam President. After agreeing to honour the former government’s 1.5 per cent pay offer for police, when in government, the Labor Party reneged on that promise. Of their own volition, police officers choose to serve the community. They do the most horrible job imaginable and are then

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pilloried for it by the media, lawyers and weak judges, with no backup from the government or their minister. A couple of female police officers were recently filmed trying to apprehend someone resisting arrest. They were later referred to the Corruption and Crime Commission. For members who are unaware, that is normal practice. Sometimes police officers have to physically struggle with people who do not want to be arrested. That is real life. Those officers were referred to the CCC.

Where is the \$16 million meth border force? Tough action on meth trafficking: where is it? The statewide strategy to tackle the methamphetamine crisis: where is it? The Premier said —

“We need drastic action and we need it now.”

“The current approach of cheap slogans and ad-hoc responses isn’t working.”

Yes, he was talking about the meth crisis—the most urgent social policy matter of today—and we are still waiting for something to happen.

Returning to the Western Australian Police Union pay dispute, I note that the silence of the politically based unions on this is extraordinary. How long will they stay silent while their police comrades are being treated so appallingly?

The hike in household costs I referred to earlier has affected Western Australians from all walks of life, from business owners to public servants. In my contribution to the budget speech this month, I pointed out that the proposed budget of this government was a road map to economic recession. Lo and behold, right now WA is reported to be the dole state in Australia, with unemployment rates booming and recession knocking on the door. The June quarter national accounts from Treasury reveal that Western Australia’s economy remains in a slump, with state final demand registering zero growth over the quarter and falling 3.3 per cent over the year. Western Australian workers continue to suffer big cuts, with real per capita wages and salaries declining 6.1 per cent in the year to June 2017—a far cry indeed from the heady days of the mining boom. Last Friday the annual state accounts were released; they shed more light on Western Australia’s economic depression. Western Australian real gross state product—essentially state final demand plus net exports—fell by 2.7 per cent in 2016–17. According to media reports, Perth is the second most expensive city in Australia, just behind Sydney.

The cost of living in WA has gone up, household bills are blowing out, our streets have become unsafe and vulnerable to drink-drivers, and there is no funding for breath testing or extra police on the streets. It is now clear, to me at least, that the government has let down the people of Western Australia in so many ways. I urge the government to acknowledge that it has not fulfilled many, many pre-election commitments. I call on the Premier to start making bold decisions for the benefit of all Western Australians. I think the people of WA deserve better. I open the floor to other members. Thank you.

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House) [10.43 am]: It is a bit hard to know where to start, really. The honourable member had 20 minutes to talk, and took 15 or 16 minutes to tear down the McGowan Labor government. I would have to say it was not the most inspiring of contributions. I think the analogy the member was trying to draw was to do with critiquing in the same way that teachers critique students. He got his facts wrong there, but let us move on. I will do three things in response. I will read out a list of more than 50 election commitments that we have delivered. I will address the issue the member raised about our fine, outstanding police force. I will also tackle the issue and draw the member’s attention to the facts around Synergy. I know members opposite cannot wait for me to read the list of election commitments that we have already delivered on.

Several members interjected.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I know.

Several members interjected.

Hon SUE ELLERY: And this list is not complete, because I will not have enough time to read the entire list. I am in a time-limited debate, and I want to give the honourable member the respect that the motion, if not his contribution, deserves.

I will start with the most important point—that is, recognising the important and dangerous job our police officers do every single day. We support and recognise the great job that Western Australian police officers do to protect and serve our community. Every single day police officers literally physically put their lives on the line to protect us. They demonstrate exceptional dedication, and every day go above and beyond what is expected of them. The government inherited a difficult financial position, and within months lost nearly \$400 million in revenue from the books. We had to look at every single line item in the budget and made the difficult decision to apply a wages policy of \$1 000 to all public sector pay negotiations. It reflects the reality of the state’s economic circumstances, and provides fairness across the public sector. We are committed to delivering a fair outcome through these

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processes as soon as possible. There has been common ground reached between the negotiators working on the police pay deal, and I am hopeful it will come to a satisfactory conclusion very soon. I want to touch on the issue —

Hon Jim Chown interjected.

Hon SUE ELLERY: My friend Hon Jim Chown will have his chance in a second, and I look forward to a fantastic erudite contribution from him, as we always get.

I want to tackle the issue that the member touched on around —

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Is there a standing order to prevent sarcasm?

Hon SUE ELLERY: The thing is, *Hansard* does not pick that up!

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! This a time-limited debate. The Leader of the House has the call.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will touch on the Synergy issue because I think the member is a bit confused about what that actually is. We approved the state-owned energy generator and retailer, Synergy, to enter into a joint venture with a private sector investor to build a new wind farm near Eneabba. The joint venture will ensure that Synergy meets its Large-scale Renewable Energy Target obligations through local projects and will create about 200 new construction jobs. We are required to meet those targets under commonwealth legislation. The point that needs to be made is that it will create a vehicle under which the state will own around 20 per cent and the private equity partner will own 80 per cent. The asset will be operated by Synergy, not by the private equity partner—that is why it is called private equity. It will be operated by Synergy. That means that despite the 20–80 split, because of the size of the wind farm we are talking about, the renewable energy assets on Synergy’s balance sheet will actually increase quite considerably as a result of this decision. The public asset will grow. There will be more of it as a consequence of the decision.

I will now go to the bit that I know everybody is really excited about. In the first eight and a half months, we delivered our first state budget, outlining a clear plan to get Western Australia back on track; introduced the Western Australian Jobs Bill 2017 into Parliament; and tore up—the honourable member will appreciate this—the skilled migration list and put WA jobs first. Our government immediately stopped work on the disastrous Perth Freight Link; secured the Productivity Commission review into the goods and services tax; and secured \$2.3 billion in funding for job-creating and congestion-busting infrastructure, which members opposite said we could not do. We have delivered \$1.34 billion in funding to get Metronet underway; delivered a \$2.7 billion investment in roads; submitted business cases to Infrastructure Australia for the Yanchep extension and Thornlie–Cockburn line as part of Metronet; invested \$129 million into new cycling infrastructure across Perth; invested \$425 million over five years for destination and marketing and event tourism; and awarded local company Civmec the contract to build the Swan River pedestrian footbridge, creating around 250 local jobs. The government has delivered \$465 million to upgrade school infrastructure and announced \$12 million to establish science labs in 200 WA primary schools, the first 100 of which have already been announced. We have invested more than \$4 billion in royalties for regions across regional WA, and refocused royalties for regions on the delivery of jobs in regional WA. We have increased funding for regional roads by more than 20 per cent. The government has also set up a taskforce to plan for the outer harbour in Kwinana, and allocated \$35 million to kickstart the Ocean Reef marina upgrades.

Our government has introduced into Parliament new laws to deal with methamphetamine traffickers, which include maximum life sentences and unlimited fines, and has announced funding to get the meth action plan underway and set up the Methamphetamine Action Plan Taskforce. The government has introduced no body, no parole laws. Murderers who do not bring closure to victims’ families will not be offered parole. The government also introduced the toughest dangerous sex offender laws in the country.

The government froze TAFE fees to make apprenticeships and training more accessible for our young Western Australians, and fast-tracked an additional 300 education assistants and 50 Aboriginal and Islander education officers to support our hardworking schoolteachers. We have created a dedicated team to plan, build and manufacture the Metronet network. We have started planning our first medihotels, and we are commissioning a sustainable health review. The government is delivering a \$61.7 million boost for mental health support. The government has introduced family and domestic violence leave for public servants, giving more support to those who need it most. We have introduced amendments to the Workers’ Compensation and Injury Management Act to increase compensation to the families of victims.

The government has also initiated the commission of inquiry into the secret deals and mismanaged projects of the previous Barnett–Nahan government. We have kept Western Power in public hands, where it belongs. The government launched OnBoardWA to create more diversity on WA boards and committees, reduced the number

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of government departments to 25 as part of our plan to drive change across the public sector, and handed down the interim report of the Service Priority Review. The government has also created Defence West and appointed a defence advocate to secure a bigger share of defence work for Western Australia. Six industry engagement consortiums have been held to engage business on plans to diversify the economy and create jobs.

A container deposit scheme will commence in early 2019, and a ban was announced on single-use plastic bags to apply from 1 July 2018. The government recently introduced laws to end the statute of limitations on victims of child sexual abuse, commenced a comprehensive review of the Local Government Act, launched the new industry fund to support innovation and create jobs, delivered the agreement for football to play at the new stadium, and secured a long-term funding arrangement for the RAC south west emergency rescue helicopter.

Several members interjected.

Hon SUE ELLERY: The government has saved WA from a credit rating downgrade. We have introduced legislation to expunge homosexual convictions and apologise to the community. The government also overturned the ban on the safety enclosure for mixed martial arts and delivered the first major MMA event for Perth. We saved the Margaret River Pro, and we will be expanding the Gourmet Escape to the Swan Valley. We have added extra 24-hour police stations and extended the hours of our police stations. The government introduced the hugely successful rebate program for personal shark protection devices. We also held a bushfire mitigation summit. There are more. That list does not include a range of other things, such as the list of projects under the Local Projects, Local Jobs program, which I know the other side so endorses. It does not include all those things. In extremely difficult financial circumstances, this government put its shoulder to the wheel and dedicated itself to the task of delivering on a range of election promises. I look forward to continuing that over the next four years.

I appreciate that the honourable member does not consider himself to be a professional politician, but I am sorry to tell him that he is judged to be a politician because he sits in the Parliament. He has to accept the criticism that goes with that. He has to accept that, as a politician, he is expected to conduct himself in a certain way and to have pretty broad shoulders. I urge the honourable member —

Several members interjected.

Point of Order

Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD: Madam President, my leader does not need any help at all, but I do have some sympathy for Hansard. If you could allow Hansard to do their job.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Hon Martin Pritchard. It is a good point; there are actually some very loud voices in this place. I only want to hear one loud voice right now, and that is the voice of the Leader of the House.

Debate Resumed

Hon SUE ELLERY: I was quite enjoying yelling; I found it quite cathartic. The member is a politician, whether he likes it or not. The only thing I would urge the honourable member to do, if I can offer some advice, which he can take or choose to ignore, is to perhaps think twice before pressing the button on his Twitter account when providing the commentary that he provides on a regular basis on a whole range of things. As a politician, people judge us on those things as well.

Several members interjected.

Hon SUE ELLERY: That is what I am saying. If I can offer the member a bit of gratuitous advice, which he may choose to completely ignore, it is that he should think twice before pressing the send button.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: When members quieten down, I will give the call to Hon Tjorn Sibma.

HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan) [10.56 am]: Thank you very much, Madam President. I thought we were heading in the trajectory demonstrated by the other place this morning. We will see where we go.

I would first like to thank the honourable member for bringing forward this motion, which seems to be the default motion in this place. I do not think that is because of any lack of imagination; it is just that the government provides so much fodder that we are compelled, as a house, to return ceaselessly, endlessly and eternally to this motion. I want to begin by making some observations about the contribution made by the Leader of the House. My first observation is that I wish this government actually conducted its affairs with the same vigour that it has for self-promotion. More energy was demonstrated then by the Leader of the House than the government has demonstrated in getting on with the job of government since it was elected in March!

I look forward to reading a tabled version of that list of so-called achievements, because there were a couple that would probably bear closer scrutiny.

Hon Peter Collier: More than a couple.

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Hon TJORN SIBMA: I am being generous. I want to give other members an opportunity to speak, because my remarks will be brief. If I heard correctly, the state government is claiming credit for a Productivity Commission review into the GST distribution. Did I hear that right?

Hon Donna Faragher: You did hear that claim.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: I do not think the evidence supports that claim. I will not accept that list of 50; I will mark the government down to 49.

Hon Darren West: It is 51. I have got it here.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: The list has not been leaked, unfortunately. The member must have got to the mole.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon TJORN SIBMA: This is very unruly, Madam President; I seek your protection.

The PRESIDENT: Hon Tjorn Sibma is right; it is not a team sport. You have the call. Address your comments to me.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: I will, Madam President. I will make a second observation about the contribution made by the Leader of the House: I thought her remarks were unbecoming of a Leader of the House, as they were exceptionally patronising of the crossbench. I make the observation that the government would perhaps have had a little more luck this year in moving through its regulations if it had treated the crossbench with something that did not border on contempt. That is something to reflect upon over the summer break.

The third observation was the gratuitous advice provided by the Leader of the House that as professional politicians we must have broad shoulders and be prepared to face criticism. I think that is entirely correct and it is related to the second part of this motion—the government’s failure to deliver on election promises. One of the inherent promises a party makes when going to an election is about the calibre and integrity of the candidates that it puts forward and the claims that they make when seeking office. This gets to the heart of accountability. Unfortunately, the Premier’s performance over the last two weeks on matters concerning the member for Darling Range has not upheld the intent to run an open, transparent and accountable government.

I will be very considered in my remarks concerning this issue because there are matters at heart relating to the circumstances of the member for Darling Range that need to be treated sensitively. I admit that and I think that it was obvious from the tone of the explanation that he provided to the other place earlier this morning. But that does not obviate, mitigate, defer or foreclose valid interrogation by this Parliament. In the last two weeks, any question pertaining to the claims, the credentials or the experience of the member for Darling Range have been rebuffed. That is inexcusable. As much as we must consider the health and welfare of individual members, we must also remember that we owe an obligation to the broader community of Western Australia and its constituencies to uphold the integrity of members in this place. Less than 24 hours ago, Labor members in the other place used their numbers to vote against the claims being made by the member for Darling Range being referred to the Procedure and Privileges Committee. That has changed in the last few hours. The change was driven by the inadequate explanation provided by that member. If the Leader of the House is going to lecture other members in this house about having broad shoulders, let us apply that great wisdom equally.

Hon Darren West: He deserves his opportunity to have his say.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: He provided it and it was completely inadequate.

Hon Darren West: What’s wrong with that?

Hon TJORN SIBMA: You let him go yesterday, so I assumed that you knew more.

Hon Darren West: He hadn’t given his explanation yesterday. You’ve got to be fair about this.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: We have been completely fair. Remarks made by members of the opposition about this matter have been fair and balanced. But members cannot pull down the cloak of mental illness or concern for people’s welfare to foreclose valid investigations. The Premier was only moved today because he had nowhere else to go.

Hon Dr Sally Talbot: You’re a disgrace.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: That is an appalling assessment. I make these remarks because I know people who have post-traumatic stress disorder that was acquired in combat zones and acquired by police officers after their experiences. They each know better than to use that as an excuse for providing false pretences.

Hon Dr Sally Talbot: That’s outrageous!

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Hon TJORN SIBMA: That is not an outrage! The misapprehension and misuse of this is the outrage. It undermines any claim that this government can make that it is running an accountable and transparent show.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: I will not take an interjection from Hon Alannah MacTiernan.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Because you're scared—that's why.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: No, not really.

Hon Dr Sally Talbot: You might want to have a good look at *Hansard* when it comes out and work out whether you can live with yourself.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: I can live with myself very easily, honourable member. I am not on trial here. The Premier, as the leader of the government, has mismanaged this issue and he now has nowhere else to go. I would not even have considered raising this topic if it were not for the gratuitous contribution, which was completely lacking in all sensitivity and self-awareness, that was provided by the Leader of the House to the honourable member over there to have broad shoulders and to be willing to accept criticism. If the Leader of the House can provide that guidance, I think she should take her own medicine as well. There is no mystery about why we keep coming back to this recurrent theme. At every opportunity, government members run from accountability, transparency and openness. If this is the gold standard and this is how it begins its term of government, woe betide it over the forthcoming years. I think it is going in only one trajectory, and that is down. We will return to motions like this time and again.

HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary) [11.05 am]: Before I begin the substantive motion, I take this opportunity to rebut the remarks made by the previous speaker. I encourage everyone at this time to show some sensitivity and sympathy to the member for Darling Range, who is, indeed, going through a very difficult time. The same sensitivity was shown to a member of the previous government who went through a similar sad time.

Hon Donna Faragher: Really?

Hon DARREN WEST: Certainly by me. I think that mental health issues should be respected more. We have moved on from days gone by and I think that although the member has some explaining to do and has made some mistakes, we are all guilty of that. He has made an explanation to the house. I think we need to be sensitive to this and let natural justice take its course. I am sure that it will.

Hon Jim Chown: He's resigning, is he; resigning from Parliament?

Hon DARREN WEST: It is not a matter for the member or me. I think that it needs to be left where it is and treated with some sensitivity around the person involved. Can members put themselves in his position? It can be argued that he has put himself there, but I think that we need to be somewhat compassionate and sensitive about matters such as post-traumatic stress disorder and its effects.

I thank Hon Charles Smith for bringing this motion forward. I do not agree with it at all, but I think that Thursday mornings in the house are an opportunity for those in opposition to raise matters that they think are important and that they wish to have aired in the house, much as we did when we were in opposition. I take note of Hon Tjorn Sibma's remarks. It has become the default position that the opposition criticises the government. There is really nothing new about that. I think that this was a little bit over the top and I think the contribution was less than one of the finest that we have heard here. I sat here thinking that, although the member has been around for only a short while, it must be a bit sad to be a glass—fully empty type of person. No matter how poorly members might think the government is doing, there are always positive things that governments do. I remember acknowledging that rarely about the previous government, but from time to time the government does things that are in the best interests of the public and that the public supports.

Hon Jim Chown: Tell us one. Tell us one you have accomplished in 10 months.

Hon DARREN WEST: It is interesting that Hon Jim Chown should say that. I am about to. As a matter of fact, not only do I have the list here that the Leader of the House read out, but I also have another list and I will be reading that out. It pertains to Hon Jim Chown's electorate. We have been in government for eight months. We have a progressive agenda that we set out for the Western Australian people before the election and we are getting on with that progressive agenda. Members of the Western Australian public whom I talk to and move with are predominantly conservative people. In the area where I live and the circles that I move in people are generally satisfied with what they have seen so far. I can tell members that, and I have seen some polling that suggests that that is the case. To say that the government has not completed all its election commitments in eight months is

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probably a reasonable thing to say. I do not think there has ever been a government that has finished all its election commitments in eight months.

Hon Simon O'Brien: I would actually prefer that you did not deliver a good deal of those election commitments, to be quite honest.

Hon DARREN WEST: That is right, member, because then the public would be dissatisfied and maybe they would have a different view at the next election. The way things are tracking at the moment, I think the public is satisfied with the choice it made in March 2017 and were an election held today, I expect we would get a very similar result to the one in March. I expect that in 2021 there will not be a lot of ground made by a fairly hapless and limp opposition, might I say, on the government's insurmountable and overwhelming numbers in the other place. I think it is fair to say that although we all agree we need electoral reform, it is always a challenge for progressive governments to hold the numbers in the Legislative Council. Should there be electoral reform, maybe there will be a fairer system that enables both sides to have the numbers in the Legislative Council at the end of each election. There is a thumping and overwhelming majority of 41 seats to the Labor government in the Legislative Assembly, and the party with the next most has 13, yet in this house, the government does not have the numbers. People in the electorate wonder why that is. There are people here elected on very, very small margins and I am a supporter of electoral reform to get a more representative house for the wishes of the people.

I move on and will not take up all my time because there has to be a lot of people who want to talk about this. I will talk about the state electorate of Geraldton, where my electorate office is. It is in the Agricultural Region as Hon Jim Chown, Hon Colin de Grussa and Hon Rick Mazza will know. Geraldton is a fantastic regional community. It is a very strong regional community that has had a hammering under the last eight years of the Liberal-National government. We are turning things around in Geraldton and we have made some major commitments to Geraldton, including finally redeveloping Geraldton Hospital. The Liberals and Nationals talked about it and promised it for eight and a half years and when we got into government we found out they had not even done any planning on Geraldton Hospital. They had committed to it no less than three times. They had not even begun planning work, which has turned out somewhat of a delay for us, because we had to start at the notebook. We thought that the planning would be done and we would have some costings and scoping works done but there was nothing. We are now doing that planning and scoping work and will be redeveloping the Geraldton regional hospital. Incidentally, members, that will make the scorecard of new hospitals in Geraldton Labor three, coalition zero. When this development is finished, this will be the third major health commitment to Geraldton made by a Labor government. The coalition is yet to get off the mark. It is run out for a duck. We also made some commitments in Geraldton and can I just say that the support of the Geraldton community towards Labor during the recent election was extraordinary. We ran a very positive and solid campaign. We had a fantastic candidate in Geraldton and we secured a primary vote of 7 100 to the Liberals 5 800. The Liberals had a 22 per cent margin over us.

Point of Order

Hon COLIN HOLT: I am not quite sure about the relevancy of this part of the member's debate in his contribution to the non-government business motion put by Hon Charles Smith, and ask that he return to the subject matter.

The PRESIDENT: Hon Colin Holt, I think that the member has actually referred to election commitments and I am sure that he is coming back to discuss that through what happened in that particular part of the state. I encourage him to focus on the motion that we are dealing with.

Debate Resumed

Hon DARREN WEST: As you correctly assumed, Madam President, I am getting to the list of commitments that we not only made before the election, but also delivered. In that election campaign, we went to the people and said that we know that they had been neglected for the last eight and a half years and we were going to offer them the following commitments such as the hospital, which I touched on, and major upgrades to high schools and Geraldton airport. They were all announced and committed and will be funded. We also made a number of commitments to Geraldton under our Local Projects, Local Jobs program to invest in our community initiative. We put a flyer out before the election. For the benefit of Hon Charles Smith, I will run through the commitments we made in Geraldton. We committed \$90 000 to the Geraldton cycleway strategy. There had been no work done on a cycling strategy in Geraldton. We are delivering that. We committed to the school IT enhancement project. Schools have a lot of IT hardware but very little training for staff. We have provided \$245 000 to schools to pay for relief teachers so that staff can go away and learn how to better use the IT that has been provided. We have delivered \$50 000 for upgrades to and programs for Gunnado Farm, owned by the Streeties, the Geraldton Streetwork Aboriginal Corporation. The creative hub in Geraldton holds the only regional hub of the Fringe Festival, called Funtavia. There were no ablutions there, so we put \$30 000 towards that and it has been able to

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achieve another \$50 000 from Lotterywest. We have solved that issue and created an amenity there to host events. The Minister for Regional Development was at the Geraldton hub of Fringe last year. We have provided \$20 000 to the Geraldton police and community youth centre to fix up the quarter midget cars to take to the speedway and engage kids who are good at mechanics and like racing. We have provided \$40 000 to Geraldton Foodbank for it to bring in food at times of the year when it has the most demand. We have delivered \$40 000 to a future leaders program in the midwest, \$25 000 for upgrades to software and technology at the Geraldton University Centre and \$50 000 for the Drummond beach revitalisation project. We have re-funded and delivered \$20 000 to the Bundiyarra newsletter, which was cut under the previous government. We have delivered \$25 000 for a surf lifesaving vehicle at Back Beach; \$80 000 for the midwest school holiday engagement program in Spalding; \$80 000 to Pollinators to help keep its doors open; \$25 000 to make events accessible for those with disabilities; we have put back \$50 000 for the Geraldton mammogram service—the only mammogram machine between here and Darwin and for which the previous government cut funding; \$10 000 for a beautification project in Rangeway; and, \$20 000 to upgrade the Woorree Park BMX track. We have delivered on our commitments to the Agricultural Region and we will deliver all our commitments to Western Australia.

HON COLIN HOLT (South West) [11.16 am]: I will just make a brief contribution. I want to concentrate on one particular aspect of the non-government business motion moved by Hon Charles Smith about transparency and accountability and focus on some of the answers we get from ministers, in particular ministers who represent ministers in the other place. I have been here now for two terms, luckily enough in government, and I always thought that this chamber had a level of standards about trying our hardest to answer the opposition's questions. When I was a minister, I always approached it in a way that tried to fix the issues and the problems that might have been out there and raised by any member in this place. I have to say that the questions now asked by members of the opposition to ministers across this chamber, especially when they represent ministers from the other place, have been answered with a fairly disappointing approach. I think they have often been used to block any answer. I asked a question yesterday around payroll tax figures, and the answer should have been readily available at Treasury but I was told to write to the Treasurer himself to get that information.

This is my first opportunity to come back to an issue that I raised a little while ago in question time when I asked the minister representing the Minister for Racing and Gaming a question about the Gaming and Wagering Commission of Western Australia's wage bets levies. At the time I was directed by that answer to a website. The answer was —

I thank the honourable member for notice of this question. The following information has been provided to me by the Minister for Racing and Gaming.

The revenue received by the Gaming and Wagering Commission of Western Australia through the racing bets levy for the 2012–13, 2013–14, 2014–15 and 2015–16 financial years is available in the Gaming and Wagering Commission's annual reports, which are publicly available.

I raised a point of order, Madam President, if you remember, that I thought that was pretty poor form because we have asked questions before when we wanted to get things on the parliamentary record and we have often been directed to a website. I think at the time the representative minister said to me, "I will go back and get an answer and address it." The President made a ruling and reminded ministers and parliamentary secretaries who represent ministers in the other place that they might want to think about the answers they supply in this house. I think it was a timely reminder, because, yes, we take opposition seriously here. We want answers to our questions and we do not want to be directed to a website or an annual report when we want to get the answer onto the parliamentary record. That was not the first time that I had asked the question of that particular minister representing the Minister for Racing and Gaming in the other place. Another time I got a very similar answer basically telling me to look at the annual reports that each of those agencies, in this case Racing and Wagering Western Australia, submit to Parliament, even though Racing and Wagering Western Australia is usually late with its annual report.

I want to focus on a particular question I asked on 11 October to the minister representing the Minister for Tourism. The question was as follows —

I refer to the minister's recent trip to Singapore.

- (1) Did the government pay for any media to accompany the minister?
- (2) If yes to (1), who was the journalist and from which media company?
- (3) What was the total cost to the taxpayer of taking a journalist on the trip?
- (4) Who did the minister meet with regarding his racing portfolio?
- (5) Will the minister table his itinerary?

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I thought the itinerary looked pretty good and that the people to minister met with were quite adequate. In fact, I thought it was a great move for the minister to go to Singapore to try to promote tourism and Western Australia, and particularly the TABtouch Masters Series for Perth Racing, which we are right in the middle of now. He met with appropriate people and I am sure he got some really good media in Singapore to promote Western Australia. That is what he should do: go over there, promote Western Australia and get as much media as he can. But I fail to understand why he would take a member of the Western Australian media on his trip to Singapore to report back to us about what a great job he did over there. How does taking a journalist from Western Australia with the minister on that trip promote Western Australia to the Singaporeans? The answer to the question was that yes, the minister did take someone from the media and they were paid a total cost of \$1 218.16. I have no real problem with that amount either. But this is the answer I got to question (2), which was: who was the journalist and from which media company? The answer was —

... It was a senior reporter at *The Sunday Times*.

That says to me one of two things. The minister really does not want to answer the question or he did not know who he paid for. He sat on a plane with someone from *The Sunday Times* who he did not know, but who he paid for. That is not a standard that we should accept. That is not open transparency from a government. It would not have taken anything for the minister to supply the information to the minister representing him in this house about who the journalist was. It is a standard we should not accept here. I hope that Madam President's ruling when I raised a point of order on 31 October is sending a clear signal to the ministers who represent other ministers in this place. For the Minister for Tourism to supply that answer to an honest question in this house is, in my view, very poor.

HON ALANNAH MacTIERNAN (North Metropolitan — Minister for Regional Development) [11.23 am]: I have served a total of 13 years in opposition in various chambers and I understand that all oppositions raise motions such as the one we have here. Notwithstanding the fact that I believe that we have done a very fine job, as has been set out by the speakers opposite, of course it is the task of oppositions and crossbenchers to hold government to account, so one takes absolutely zero offence with oppositions doing what oppositions have always done and always will do. The opposition will critique us for the things it does not like and we, of course, will defend our record and seek to point out some structural contradictions in the positions the opposition takes. I do not think there are any surprises or grief about this motion today. But I have to say that I was very surprised by the initial comments of Hon Charles Smith, because he really is presenting himself as a Liberal in One Nation clothing. I understood that he was on the crossbench, not a sort of surrogate of the Liberal Party, but by the way he was talking, saying things like, "We will get back into government after one term", it is very clear that Hon Charles Smith at least sees himself very much as part of the Liberal establishment. I am sure that that is very, very disappointing for many of the people who voted for Hon Charles Smith. I must say that I would not level the same criticism towards Hon Robin Scott or Hon Colin Tincknell, who, although we would say they are on the conservative side of politics, I think have really distinguished themselves in many ways in striking out an independent stance.

I will point out that this great enthusiasm for the re-election of a Liberal government that we got from Hon Charles Smith is really at odds with what he went on to say. He went on to signal out that one of the core One Nation commitments was an opposition to the sale of Western Power, yet the team that he has been spruiking, which he wants back in government after one term, had at the core of its policy, as its principle and strategy to repair the budget damage it had done, to sell Western Power. I must say that I find incredibly contradictory Hon Charles Smith's enthusiasm to be, as I say, a Lib in One Nation clothing, claiming that he is diametrically opposed to the sale of Western Power and then on the other hand, running around and saying he wants a party in government whose absolute central policy at the last election was in fact to do the opposite.

Hon Charles Smith also said that we have not sought to spread the pain of budget repair. The member has twice voted against our propositions on the gold tax and, to be perfectly honest, I think that the critique that was raised about the gold tax mark 1 and some of the impacts it would have had on a number of companies was valid, which is why we listened to the commentary that was made, including the very reasonable comments made by Hon Colin Tincknell and Hon Robin Scott. We sought to revise that policy to ensure that the unintended consequences for some of the goldminers would not be affected so we could get money from those large multinationals, some of which are doing incredibly well and have an average weighted cost of around \$600, but are getting something in the order of \$1 500 for the production —

Hon Darren West: It was \$1 700 today.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: It was \$1 700 today.

They were the people that we wanted to get some money from. Also, our payroll tax affects the top one per cent of Western Australian employers, and they, of course, include all the very large multinational companies operating.

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I hope that with those concerns, Hon Charles Smith will back us as we seek to get more money from the Rios, the BHPs and the FMGs. I will take him at his word that he wants to have this pain spread and I look forward to him supporting us on the gold tax.

We have covered Western Power. We agree that we are not going to sell Western Power. It is a piece of monopoly infrastructure and the sale of monopoly infrastructure is a very great mistake, as we saw with the one that was made by the Liberal–National government in 2000 when it sold the freight rail infrastructure. We had no disagreement with selling the freight business, but selling that piece of monopoly infrastructure has turned out to be a major disadvantage for the community. Hon Simon O’Brien made it even worse when he was minister by removing the one safeguard, the use-it-or-lose-it provision, which has now created a really difficult situation.

I want to also reflect on the notion of a professional politician. Hon Charles Smith’s spiritual leader, Pauline Hanson, has been in the political game for over 20 years. Indeed, his party receives and keeps its structure alive through the public funding of its party apparatus, so he is part of the political system. At what point does he cease to be unlike one of us and accept that he is, in fact, a politician? He has been elected. He is paid. His party lives on the contributions that are made through the public funding scheme. I think he owes it to the people to understand that. Most of us in this chamber have all had lives outside Parliament. We have all come here with sets of skills. We need people who can survive more than one or two terms in order to develop the sorts of skills they need to drive the community forward. I would be very cautious about making that critique, taking a salary and arguing, “I’m not a professional politician because I’m in my first term.” Does the member want only one term? At what point does he join the rest of us and accept that we are professional politicians? There is no shame in that. We all have our skills and contribute as best we can.

Hon Tjorn Sibma made many references to the unfortunate incidents in the Legislative Assembly and the situation with the member for Darling Range. We are all extremely disappointed with what has happened. We all know that these things will arise in political parties from time to time. I know that on many occasions the Liberal Party has had to disendorse candidates. Indeed, I believe Pauline Hanson was once a Liberal candidate who was disendorsed mid-election. The Premier took the position that he wanted to give the member for Darling Range an opportunity to explain himself. He understood that this was pretty much like a giant rollercoaster that the member found himself on. The Premier did not want to condemn the member until he got the opportunity to explain himself. The member’s explanation was deemed, I think, by most people in the chamber to be inadequate; hence, he has now been referred to the Procedure and Privileges Committee.

HON COLIN TINCKNELL (South West) [11.33 am]: I will try to give Hon Jim Chown a chance to speak as well, so I will make this contribution reasonably brief. The most important point about today’s non-government business motion is that this government made too many promises going into the election and it has had to break some of them. We would like it to break more, because at the moment it is overspending. We would like it to make a change to the bad habit that governments have got into over the last eight, 10 or 12 years. At the moment, it is adding to the government spend by four per cent, even though the state is in massive debt. We have made many suggestions. As Hon Charles Smith has mentioned, we have made suggestions to the government about how it can make changes to help repay that debt, and we started way back when the money was being loaned. We made a suggestion that Queensland and New South Wales have taken note of, and those states are now working with the commonwealth to reduce their debt.

We do not want to see the sale of Western Power, but the fact that power costs have gone up has defeated the purpose. At the election, the three most important issues raised by members of the Western Australian public were, firstly, jobs and employment, and the importance of that far outweighed that of the second and third issues; secondly, crime and the problems with drugs and social decay; and, thirdly, the cost of living. I know it has been only eight months, so I hope that in the next three years the government can make real headway in those three areas, because at the moment it is lagging. They are the things that we are concerned about.

As a crossbench, we get upset at times when we see the lack of respect for the upper house. We have even heard Hon Darren West talk about electoral reform. It is always amazing that people talk about electoral reform when it favours their party, but they never talk about electoral reform when it does not favour their party. That is a pretty fickle thing to talk about. We have been elected to this chamber—I have and Darren has—and the people in the lower house have been elected to the other chamber, and that is the way the Western Australian public chose us. We are very happy with members of the Western Australian public. They make very smart choices. The reason we have a crossbench and there are 13 members in this chamber who do not belong to a major party is very important to Parliament. It is the way that Parliaments across Australia are operating now. I think the major parties need to look at that; and, if they want to change that, they need to change the way they operate.

I have a massive list of points but I will try to be brief. The government is not being accountable for its actions. It has broken election promises on several occasions in just a short period. This was always going to happen. Many

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promises were not sustainable or achievable, and the government knew that this would happen when it was making them, because they were election promises—they were promises made to get elected. It talked about no new taxes and no increases in the cost of living, but, unfortunately, there have been. That is a real shame. Revenue for the government has fallen from its predicted levels before the election, but it is still higher than last year by \$2 billion. However, spending is up by almost four per cent. How can we be serious about reducing debt when spending is up by almost four per cent? That has to change. As a crossbench, our job will be to help the government find ways to change its bad spending habits.

The problem with this government is that it has not been honest and transparent with the Western Australian people. The Western Australian people need truth in priorities, not effigies or political regimes. This government has tried to raise revenue simply by increasing fees and charges in many areas of everyday life. The cost of living in Western Australia has already increased, and the government says that there is more pain to come. I cannot agree with that. It needs to make cuts to its spending. There should be no more pain to come for the WA public. There has already been enough pain in the last eight years and in the last eight months. The spending habits need to change. This government should be trying to reduce spending, not increasing the cost of living. The government is fighting to increase WA's share of GST revenue, but until this happens, it cannot keep spending the money as though it has it; it does not have it. By increasing the cost of living, the government is not fixing anything; it is only creating more pain. The crossbench is not stopping the government from fixing the budget; we just will not let it keep spending. That does not fix anything.

The government has not been honest with the Western Australian people by telling them that the crossbench and the opposition will not let it pass its budget measures. The reality is that this government is spending far too much. The former government has been condemned as a fiscally irresponsible government that racked up debts of \$30 billion over a 10-year period. Instead of learning from that, this government has increased the debt that is being added to the books. This may be a problem for the major parties. However, for as long as the major parties have this problem, the minor parties will get bigger and bigger. The major parties need to change their bad habits. This government has increased spending by four per cent. That will increase Western Australia's debt levels by about 15 per cent in just one year. This government needed to keep one promise to the people of Western Australia—that is, that it will reduce debt and government spending. That is what the government should do.

Hon Darren West said that the public is happy with the government. No, it is not. The public is not happy with the government, it is not happy with the opposition, and it is not happy with the crossbench. The public is not happy with parliamentarians across the board. That is the real truth. We all need to make changes. We all need to work together. We should not be content with the adversarial aspects of this chamber but should work together to the benefit of the public of Western Australia.

The sacking of 3 000 government employees is not the solution that we in One Nation were expecting from a party that calls itself the workers' party. We expected this government to act maturely and responsibly in dealing with the financial situation in which we find ourselves. This is a debate that can be had, but the government has determined to push ahead with some major infrastructure projects, regardless of the economic impact.

Hon Darren West: Do you want us to reduce spending or not? You have just said both.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: Of course we want the government to reduce spending. We want the government to break some of the promises that it has made but cannot keep. Some of the major infrastructure projects that we cannot afford at this time need to be shelved.

Several members interjected.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: I have the floor and I will continue to speak.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Hon Colin Tincknell, would you please continue.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: It is important to note that there is often a lack of respect by the government in the lower house for the members of the upper house. There is also sometimes a lack of respect from members opposite for the crossbench and other members on this side of the chamber. I do not believe the government is serious about making the changes that are needed. We need to spend less. We need to change the bad habits that we have got into under previous governments and now under this government. In eight months, we would have expected that the government would have learned that.

HON JIM CHOWN (Agricultural) [11.42 am]: I would like to thank Hon Charles Smith for the motion that he has moved. As had been stated by previous speakers today, I am sure that further motions of this kind will be coming forward, probably in the parliamentary sittings next year.

While I am on my feet, I would like to congratulate Hon Robin Scott for wearing a traditional kilt in this place. This is the first time I have seen that in the eight years I have been a member.

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The PRESIDENT: Today is St Andrew's Day. It is a special day, and the honourable member has permission to do so today.

Hon JIM CHOWN: Thank you for that information, Madam President. I assume Hon Robin Scott is wearing the kilt in the traditional manner, where he has the freedom of movement that is required.

Several members interjected.

Hon JIM CHOWN: It is great to see that he is wearing that kilt.

Credibility is the currency of government. At this time, I do not believe credibility is residing with the McGowan government in the state of Western Australia. One issue that needs to be teased out to some degree is the issue of Barry Urban, the member for Darling Range. Mr Urban made a statement in the other place this morning. Credibility is critical. I reflect back to what has happened at the federal level with Senator Dastyari and the treasonable comments he made. His leader came out immediately and asked for his resignation as a member of the Labor Party.

Hon DARREN WEST: Madam President —

The PRESIDENT: Hon Darren West, I can already see the point of order that will be coming the member's way. I am just going to say, Hon Jim Chown, that it is a question of relevance. You might want to focus your comments on the motion at hand and what is happening in this place.

Hon JIM CHOWN: Thank you, Madam President. I have only a couple of minutes left. I am talking about accountability. Accountability is extremely important, regardless of whether one is the Premier of a state or the Prime Minister of this nation. At this stage, I do not believe the Premier has shown any leadership in this matter. If the Premier had taken the Bill Shorten line and immediately asked for an examination of the facts, and, after those facts had been made apparent, called for the resignation of the member for Darling Range, even as a member of the Labor Party, which did not happen, that would have shown leadership. At this stage, we do not have enough information. The Premier stated in the other place that an investigation is underway. We have yet to see the outcome of that investigation.

Hon Sue Ellery: It has been referred to the Procedure and Privileges Committee.

Hon JIM CHOWN: I understand that it has been referred to the Procedure and Privileges Committee. However, that does not absolve the Premier from his responsibility as the leader of a credible government to investigate this issue and make it public in the house he represents.

Hon Sue Ellery: That is what the Procedure and Privileges Committee will do now.

Hon JIM CHOWN: That is a different process, as the Leader of the House knows. The Premier spent 10 days putting the responsibility back onto the member for Darling Range. The Premier would not make a definitive statement about this matter. All he did was obfuscate and put forward issues that were not going to be his responsibility.

Credibility is the currency of government. If we look at what happened prior to the election and at what has happened since the election, there is a whole list of issues. I do not have time today to deal with all those issues. Other members have delved into some of those issues in speaking on this motion. The Leader of the House, and Hon Darren West, member for Agricultural Region, have read out a list of the government's achievements. They are good achievements. We will examine those achievements. However, in reality they are not the big matters that we are talking about in this house today.

Hon Stephen Dawson: It is the big matters that people in the street are talking about. They are happy.

Hon JIM CHOWN: I am talking about the big-ticket issues that the Premier put forward pre-election and has now stepped back from. The government's credibility, accountability and transparency is just one matter. The wages of public servants have been frozen. The wages of members of Parliament have been frozen.

Several members interjected.

Hon JIM CHOWN: I have a problem with the fact that the Labor Party increased the salaries for its own members by nine per cent.

Hon Alanna Clohesy: You're just upset that you're not getting a pay rise! That's the real reason!

Hon JIM CHOWN: I am not upset. I would be more than happy.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! The time for this debate has ceased.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.