

TREASURER'S ADVANCE AUTHORISATION BILL 2010

Third Reading

Resumed from 17 March.

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham) [10.28 am]: I will continue my remarks on the Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill. I commenced debate on the third reading of the bill yesterday afternoon and was talking about the important issues surrounding the distribution of two speeches to the Parliament. I think I called upon the Treasurer to apologise to the Parliament, and perhaps to the staff of the bills and papers office whom he held accountable for that, and also to take some responsibility. I will be interested to hear, when he wraps up this debate, whether he takes up that opportunity and says, "Look, I made a mistake and I'm sorry about that". I think that would go a long way to repairing what has taken place.

The other major issue that came out of the debate was, of course, the \$210 million mistake in the documents provided to the Parliament for our consideration when deciding whether or not we would vote for the legislation. I think it was extraordinary. During the debate someone said—it may have even been the Treasurer—that it is not the greatest mistake ever; Richard Court read out the wrong budget speech.

Mr T.R. Buswell: I didn't say that.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Someone said it. I think a Liberal Party member may have said it. In the Treasurer's defence he said, "It's not the greatest mistake ever made in this place. The greatest mistake was in 1993 when Richard Court read out the wrong budget speech." I thought it was an unusual defence for a Liberal Party member to raise, but that is what happened in the course of the debate. People cannot control their friends sometimes, can they? So it would indeed have been the greatest mistake had it not been for a former Liberal Party Premier's mistake in 1993. The Treasurer would have held the record for the greatest mistake; he has only been outdone in that event when Richard Court came into this place in 1993 with the wrong speech. I think Richard Court he ended up blaming a very good man, Ross Bowe, a former Under Treasurer, for that mistake. However, as we all know, if a member stands in this place and reads something out, they are that members words. The former Premier Richard Court may have —

Mr P. Papalia: Can you speak without notes?

Mr I.C. Blayney: Yes.

Mr P. Papalia: That's a revelation.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am not sure what he said, but I will catch it later, I assume.

The Treasurer has committed the greatest budget error—but only in 17 years—and that was the \$210 million mistake. However, as we went along—I think it was identified correctly in today's *The West Australian*—it became clear that this Treasurer is also sloppy. He thinks he knows it all, and he is sloppy, for a range of reasons. One is his character type, whereby he thinks he is on top of everything. He is cock-a-hoop and running around the place when things are up, whistling Dixie and acting the clown. Then, of course, something comes along that completely bowls him over, and it is because of his cockiness. Through his cockiness and overconfidence he makes mistakes, and that was a doozy of a mistake—a \$210 million mistake. The Treasurer has made a lot of mistakes. I cannot imagine that a Treasurer in any other Parliament in Australia who had made as many mistakes as the Treasurer and who then made a mistake like the \$210 million one would survive it. I cannot imagine that the Treasurer in Queensland or New South Wales would survive a mistake like that. However, the Treasurer does survive. He has more lives than a cat. But what do people say? A cat has only nine lives. The Treasurer is up to about six now, so there are only a few more to go. At the rate the Treasurer has been going, I am confident that he will eventually reach that limit when even the Premier can no longer tolerate the mistakes that the Treasurer makes.

During the week, I thought it was also interesting that the Treasurer was asked in question time two questions that were slightly off point. One was about the amount of occupational health and safety training there is for officers in WorkSafe, which is the Treasurer's agency. The Treasurer's answer was, "Well, I've been to WorkSafe," which I think was meant to show that the Treasurer has shown an interest. He had been to the office of WorkSafe, and that was the extent of his interest. Then he implied that —

Mr T.R. Buswell: I meet with them every month.

Mr M. McGOWAN: But the Treasurer did say that he had been to the WorkSafe office, and that was meant to imply to us that he has a great deal of interest. In 18 months as the minister responsible, he has been to the WorkSafe office. He also asked why they would need the training. Of course, as my friend the member for Cockburn pointed out, their job is to go into dangerous workplaces, so they should be —

Mr T.R. Buswell: No, you're talking about WorkCover.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am sorry, WorkCover. They should be receiving training.

The other question was about the asbestos committee, which was a very important committee. It was designed to deal with issues surrounding a deadly substance. Once again, the Treasurer showed that he had no idea about that matter.

The Premier's defence of the Treasurer, which he raised either in debate on this bill or in question time, was that he called the Treasurer the world's greatest Treasurer, or the greatest Treasurer in Western Australian history. If I were to ask the Premier who the Treasurer was in the Newton Moore government, in the Scaddan government or in the McLarty government, I doubt that he would be able to tell me who those Treasurers were. Therefore, I think the Premier's historical analysis might be slightly incorrect, because if he cannot identify who the past Treasurers were, how can he say that the current Treasurer is the best? He cannot do that. In any event, I thought it was quite revealing that when the Premier stood up and said it, with an attempt at a straight face, although I think I saw a slight curl at the corner of his lips, there was a lot of laughter. The laughter on the Treasurer's side was not quite as great as it was on this side, but as I looked around the acres of the back bench, there was a considerable amount of mirth, in particular from the member for Scarborough. When I pointed that out, the Premier looked around at her, and she zipped her lips very quickly. However, there was a considerable amount of mirth on the government back bench, because people —

Mrs L.M. Harvey: It was not mirth; it was sheer joy at his audacity in being prepared to say what he believed. It's all about heart.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Sheer joy at his audacity? I think that backs my argument. Sheer joy at the Premier's audacity to say that the Treasurer is the greatest Treasurer in history? If it is audacious to say that, it implies that it is not true. Otherwise, I think the member for Scarborough needs to do a bit of English study. However, I appreciate the member's support for what I am saying. It was interesting to look around the government back bench and see the amusement. Of course, had the Treasurer led the Liberal Party to the election, as was indeed my hope, most members opposite would not be here. So I suppose they are all smiling with relief at the fact that the Treasurer was not the leader when they went to the election. In any event, they are probably all smiling with some amusement now because he is up to about six of his nine lives, and of course when he reaches the limit, which I know he will—because of his nature he will reach his limit and eventually he will not be able to tolerate it any more—one of the members opposite will come forward to greatness. It is only a matter of time before he shuffles back there and one of them shuffles forward. Perhaps it will be the member for Swan Hills; perhaps he will come forward as Treasurer. Perhaps it will be the member for Geraldton; perhaps he will come forward as Treasurer. One of them will come forward, which explains the amusement with which the Premier's statement that he is the greatest Treasurer was greeted on the back bench.

Mr F.A. Alban: We would not swap him for the other Treasurers in the other states, would we? No. Even if he mucks up for \$200 million, at least his figures look better than those of the other states—considerably better than those of the other states.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I was just backing the member for Swan Hills as the next Treasurer, and he is attacking me. I am in the member for Swan Hills' camp that he should be the next Treasurer of Western Australia. As a man of honour who has been out there doing important work in Ellenbrook, he would not make a \$210 million mistake; with the steel-trap mind that he exhibits, he would not make a mistake like that. I was trying to support the member for Swan Hills.

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: He is a very good what?

Mr D.A. Templeman: He has a very good abacus.

Mr M. McGOWAN: He has a great abacus, and he has a mind like a steel trap. Therefore, I would have said that he is the next one forward. That was the cause of the amusement. The nervous energy is increasing, because everyone knows that the Treasurer is nearly at the limit. Eventually he will reach that point at which he goes off the precipice and heads down the back, and the next one will shuffle forward.

What we have learned from this legislation is that this is the second highest budget blow-out in history—only surpassed by that of last year, which surpassed this year's blow-out by \$50 million. The Treasurer has managed to keep it below last year's figure only because of some of the savings measures he has put in place, which basically comprise the complete slashing of grants programs in various agencies in the Western Australian government. A whole range of agencies have had their grants programs slashed, I think to the tune of

\$150 million or so. The only reason the Treasurer has managed to keep the figure below that of last year is that all sorts of bodies in Western Australia that rely upon those grants have had those grants slashed.

What we saw during the consideration in detail stage of the debate demonstrated that the Treasurer was unable to answer many of the questions. Questions were posed and he resorted to, as he did the night before last, taking a robotic approach to the answers. He treated the house with some contempt. He kept referring to a series of issues raised by a single member in an attempt at humour but also an attempt at trying to treat the member for Cannington with contempt.

Mr T.R. Buswell: I would never do that!

Mr M. McGOWAN: He dragged out the debate for a long time, which meant that we had to continue yesterday and, eventually, the government gagged debate on the second biggest budget blow-out in history. The Treasurer treated the matter with some contempt. When we asked him important questions, he showed either that he did not have knowledge of why tens, if not hundreds, of millions of dollars was required in additional expenditure, or he said, “Just ask the minister by way of question on notice.” I would have thought that, because he is the Treasurer, he would have been able to answer some of these questions. He is the Treasurer of Western Australia and these are important details that involve tens, if not hundreds, of millions of dollars of additional expenditure. The Treasurer should be able to answer the questions but he showed that he could not. The question I was most interested in related to corrective services. The Treasurer could not answer why there was a difference between the two documents; that is, his second reading speech and the document he distributed. He could not explain why there was a \$32.8 million discrepancy —

Mr T.R. Buswell: I answered that.

Mr M. McGOWAN: You have not let me finish my sentence.

The Treasurer could not answer it. It was amusing—or, I suppose, insightful would be the way to put it—because, when the Treasurer was sitting here, I posed the question about why there was a discrepancy and the back bench went a little bit silent. There was an expectant look on some members’ faces of imminent greatness. The Treasurer was quiet for 30 seconds while he rummaged, in a form of panic, through the notes that were before him to try to discover why this discrepancy was there. Anthony Kannis, a very fine Treasury officer, appeared not to know either. He started going through the midyear review to try to discover an answer. Then the Treasurer stood up and started answering a different question, in a fairly shaky manner.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Beads of sweat!

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Treasurer paled.

Mr T.R. Buswell: Member, that’s because I could see the look on Anthony Kannis’s face!

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Treasurer had a look of terror. He reminded me of the bloke approaching the executioner in some of those old movies! There was a look of complete terror on the Treasurer’s face as this search for the answer went on for about five minutes. When it was discovered that there was some slippage in part of the correctional services spending from this year to next year, which explained the discrepancy between the two figures—although it was not contained within the second reading speech —

Mr T.R. Buswell: The reason there was a discrepancy is that the amount anticipated at the time of the midyear review is less than the amount that is anticipated now. That can be for a range of reasons.

Mr M. McGOWAN: But with the growth in prison numbers, it is pretty obvious it must be expended in the next year. In any event, when it was discovered there was an excuse, however technical it might be, the palpable look of relief upon the Treasurer’s face —

Mr T.R. Buswell: Too right!

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Treasurer stood there wiping his forehead and actually said, in full view of us, “Thank God for that! I am so relieved.” It was not actually an attempt at comedy; it was actually true!

Mr T.R. Buswell: It was!

Mr M. McGOWAN: He was very relieved. But the look of complete and utter relief upon the Treasurer’s face that this was explainable, no matter how technical, was only matched by the look of complete and utter disappointment over there!

Mr T.R. Buswell: I tell you what—imagine what you’d be saying now if I did not have the answers!

Mr W.J. Johnston: You didn’t.

Mr T.R. Buswell: I did. The answer is in *Hansard*.

Mr M. McGOWAN: You did not have the answer; the assistant had the answer.

Mr T.R. Buswell: That is why they come in.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The answer was overly technical and should have been explained in the second reading speech. I know what I would have said to the Treasurer. I would have asked, “How is the back bench, member for Vasse? Are you enjoying all the time you’ve got on your hands now?” It explains the look of complete and utter relief on the Treasurer’s face because —

Dr M.D. Nahan: In disappointment!

Mr M. McGOWAN: I have got the member for Swan Hills pencilled in as the next Treasurer, not the member for Riverton!

Mr T.R. Buswell: Your problem is you’ve got yourself pencilled in as opposition leader!

Mr M. McGOWAN: Perhaps we could send you off to the United States as our representative —

Mr T.R. Buswell: The member for Victoria Park has been over there for two weeks.

Mr M. McGOWAN: No; that is right, we have closed that office. They probably would not understand the member for Riverton over there with his broad Australian accent! It was instructive that the Treasurer knew that if there had been another error, he would have been in dire trouble. The government’s back bench knew it as well. It was instructive by the Treasurer’s body language and the words he used during that debate.

Mr D.A. Templeman: I saw the member for Jandakot having a meeting with his numbers man. I am sure he saw a gap there. There was an opportunity erupting in front of his eyes!

Mr M. McGOWAN: Who was his chief numbers man?

Mr D.A. Templeman: Himself!

Ms R. Saffioti: The German shepherd!

Mr D.A. Templeman: He was salivating! Saliva was spraying left, right and centre in anticipation of the demise of the Treasurer!

Mr M. McGOWAN: He was salivating like a big German shepherd.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Absolutely.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Like a German shepherd sitting in a cafe with a ham and cheese sandwich in front of him!

Ms R. Saffioti: A lot of people have kids, too.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I have a Jack Russell and I have three children. I know very well people’s likes for their dogs and their love for their children, member for West Swan.

Mr T.R. Buswell: What is the little pooch’s name?

Mr M. McGOWAN: My dog’s name?

Mr M.P. Whitely: It’s a beagle called Buswell!

Mr M. McGOWAN: My dog is 13 years old. She arrived well before the member for Vasse arrived in the Parliament, so I could not come up with a witty name! Her name is Shelby. That will go in the dirt file! I have a Jack Russell by the name of Shelby. The Treasurer will get his “dirt staff” on the case. They will google it. Was this dog acquired by use of —

Mr J.M. Francis: He stole his dog!

Mr D.A. Templeman: They’ll be out the front of your house now taking photographs, I’m sure of it! Canine terror!

Mr M. McGOWAN: They will probably kidnap my dog and substitute a Liberal Jack Russell for it to spy on me! The member for Jandakot will be in the midst of it all. He will probably send his German shepherd down to kill my Jack Russell! I tell you what—his German shepherd has got another thing coming if it wants to take on my Jack Russell! Anyway, I can see we are getting off the point.

The revised document and the older document relating to the Treasurer’s Advance Authorisation Bill demonstrate the additional government spending and the Treasurer’s poor budget management.

There is a range of areas in which there are some serious questions to be asked. I canvassed, but I will raise again, the three per cent efficiency dividend realisation shortfall in education and training of \$51.9 million. The reason I raised that is that the Treasurer himself told the public of Western Australia that the efficiency dividends were all delivered. He may even have told the Parliament that. If I could be bothered, I would find the part of

Hansard in which he actually said that. I do not have dirt file staff, so I do not have that information. The dividend was not delivered, so what the Treasurer told us about his budget management was not true. That is contained here in black and white. If we refer to the advertising reinstatement of appropriation, the Treasurer's excuse for the Department of Transport requiring an additional \$2.5 million in spending is that the department failed to meet some expected private sector funding that it would have received for advertising. That is not something the Treasurer should be proud of. It is a failure by a department under the control of one of his ministers.

Mr T.R. Buswell: Do you think I was happy about it?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is interesting that the Treasurer should say that, because I did not hear him say that before. All he said before was that this was a valid excuse. The valid excuse is that there was a failure by a department under the control of one of his ministers.

Mr T.R. Buswell: I was asked why it was there and I provided the reason. I did not say that I was necessarily happy. I would much rather have the \$2.5 million sitting in consolidated revenue.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It also begs the question of why it is required. Why is there a requirement for that \$2.5 million in advertising? We had a range of questions on royalties for regions from the member for Armadale, which I expect she will speak on shortly. The points were made by the member for Warnbro about the increase in the prisoner population. I heard the Treasurer's flippant remarks on that matter. The member for Warnbro expresses a very clear, concise and reasonable case that putting people in prison, for whom there are better options, is an expensive waste of money and does not serve to make those people fit into society any better. That is all that he says. The Treasurer, on the other hand, converts it to meaning that all he is trying to do is let dangerous people out onto the streets. That is not what he is trying to say, and the Treasurer knows it. He is engaging in a sensible yet slightly complex argument. To suggest that someone with his background, unparalleled by anyone in this chamber, except perhaps by the member for Willagee —

Mr J.E. McGrath: And the member for Jandakot.

Mr M. McGOWAN: As I said, unparalleled by anyone in this chamber, except perhaps by the member for Willagee. To suggest that someone like that would want to have, as I think the Treasurer put it, "bad buggers", or words to that effect, out on the streets is a nonsense, and I do not think anyone would accept it or believe it. I think that the Treasurer knows that. The member for Warnbro is saying that the Treasurer is spending a lot of money and that perhaps the Treasurer could come up with better ways of dealing with these problems. I think he is right. Of course the government can come up with better, more sensible, smarter, more efficient and more effective ways of dealing with these issues.

We then come to the Department of Environment and Conservation and the delay in the imposition of the landfill levy, which the government put in place merely to prop up the activities of the department. Again, the imposition of that levy is another failure on the Treasurer's part. I do not support what the government was proposing to do there because it is an imposition on ordinary families and the Treasurer should have been able to run his budget without doing that. Again, there is a major administrative failure, which has meant that the expenditure of an additional \$30 million is required. The Treasurer has a penchant for additional taxes and charges. There is the evidence of that. That expenditure will not be required in the future, but there is an administrative failure that has required that expenditure.

Lastly, we come to issues around Oakajee rail and port and Browse, which I think probably require some additional explanation about the actual spending and whether, particularly in the case of Oakajee, some of those matters might have been avoided. Again, the Treasurer's explanation on that was very sparse. I think the Treasurer could have been better briefed and could perhaps have provided us with a bit more information than the information that he did provide.

Needless to say, as acting shadow Treasurer I can say that we will vote for this bill. It is a budget bill and, as we are a responsible opposition, we will vote for the legislation, but we do so with great reservation about these matters and the fact that it is such an extraordinarily large amount. We do so with great reservation about the incredible mistakes, the stuff-ups and the sloppiness in the presentation of this material that the Treasurer has presented to this Parliament. I think we have identified them. I doubt that the Treasurer has all the lives left that he had at the start of last week. I think another one or two have been lost in the course of this debate. The two speeches and the \$210 million hole I think will remain on the record of the Parliament and in the public mind as another two marks against his name.

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington) [10.55 am]: I do not intend to take a very long time on this, but there are serious issues here. On 27 November 2007 the now Treasurer said —

The reason that appropriation bills need to be continually brought before the house for scrutiny is that it enables us to expose the Treasurer's complete inability to control the rampant growth in government spending in Western Australia. It is a huge issue.

It is interesting to read that quote from when the now Treasurer was in opposition when we examine the fact that this \$1.15 billion bill is for an amount that is actually three times larger than that in the bill that was being debated on 27 November 2007. The Treasurer sometimes does not get the issues that we raised with him. He says that we are always asking the government to spend more and never to spend less, so how can we criticise the government for spending this \$1.15 billion. He is effectively saying to the opposition that we should be encouraging him to have record expenditure growth. The point we make is that we are trying to judge him by his standards. When in opposition he made it clear that, in his view, keeping control over finances of this state was an easy job that any bumbling idiot could do. We are just looking forward to this Treasurer meeting those standards. His continuing inability to keep control of his portfolio, to know the information in the briefs that he provides to the house and to provide accurate information to the members of this house, we do not believe is appropriate. The Treasurer proves again and again that he is not up to the job that he has been asked to do. We are not saying that he is fat; we are not saying that he is ugly; we are saying that he is not up to the job. We are entitled to do that. We will keep pointing out to the people of Western Australia that we are not interested in making personal comments about the Treasurer. We are talking about his performance in his job. We are talking about whether he is able to perform the tasks that the people of Western Australia so handsomely reward him for.

During the consideration in detail stage, I was trying to get on the record—we will come to this in more detail in a moment—the detail of the information that the Treasurer provided to the chamber. We have already heard that there was a \$210 million error in that documentation. It would be interesting for the Treasurer to let us know whether he actually read the information he provided to the chamber before he gave it out at the start of the debate on the Treasurer's advance authorisation. It seems to me that it is fundamental to his job to actually read something that he is going to give out. Why is it that it is okay for the Treasurer to come into this place and provide inaccurate information, which he has not checked, and say that he cannot tell us who in his office was responsible for checking information? It seems to me fundamental to his duties that he should do that. This is not a moot issue, because I have in my hand the information provided during last year's Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill, which, of course, set a record for authorisations. This year the Treasurer has requested \$1.15 billion, which is much higher than when we were in power. The government has requested an enormous amount to cover its over-expenditure.

When the opposition examined the appropriation bills that were brought to us just a couple of weeks ago, 93 per cent of the matters covered in the appropriation bills were not reflected in the information provided by the Treasurer at the time of the authorisation bill. That shows a complete and utter lack of accountability. The government cannot expect the people of Western Australia to accept a situation in which 93 per cent of the information provided to the Parliament of Western Australia is wrong. That is exactly what happened with the Treasurer's authorisation in 2009. What confidence can we have in the information provided by the Treasurer in 2010, when we know that the information was inaccurate when it was provided? What other inaccuracies are there in that information? The Treasurer has tried to prevent proper scrutiny. He refused to table the information in the chamber, so that it would not form part of *Hansard*, which means that he could not be held accountable in following years for providing that information. Then, during the consideration in detail stage, he filibustered to prevent the inclusion of the detailed information in the permanent record of the Parliament. Because of that, when he comes back to the Parliament next year and asks for an appropriation for this extraordinary, incredible level of additional expenditure that shows a complete lack of control by this Treasurer in any aspect of his work, we will not be able to hold the Treasurer accountable because there will not be a proper record in *Hansard*.

The Treasurer's deliberate behaviour suggests that we need to change the procedure for these bills, because he is hiding behind the practices of the past. In the past, we did not have this sort of deceitful behaviour and we did not have the same level of problem with dishonesty as we have seen from this Treasurer. But now that we have this problem of dishonesty, the approach taken needs to be changed so that there will be proper accountability for the failure of the Treasurer.

During consideration in detail, I asked the Treasurer about the 11 broken election promises that had been detailed to the Parliament through the appropriation process for last year's Treasurer's authorisation. On 11 occasions, the Liberal Party went to the people of this state and said that it would do these things if elected; it has broken its word. I asked the Treasurer a very simple question about the broken promises, which are reflected in the information that he provided at the time of the appropriation bill. They are described as re-cashflowing, which suggests that the money will be returned to the budget in a future year. Those amounts are not included in the 2009–10 budget, they are not identified in the midyear review, and they are not identified in the detailed information about the Treasurer's advance that the Treasurer provided to the chamber. The people of this state

can draw only one conclusion from that: the Liberal Party is simply walking away from its commitments. For example, it promised to cut taxes, and yet it has, in fact, increased taxes. That is the only conclusion that can be reached. When I asked the Treasurer to identify in the paperwork he provided to the opposition and Parliament where these re-cashflowing amounts are, he asked me to show him the line item. That is pretty weak. Perhaps the Treasurer simply did not know where the information was, which is fine. All he needed to do was say that he did not know the answer to that information but that he would find out for the Parliament, for the state, and for the people of Western Australia, what was happening about this issue. But, no; his contempt for the process of proper government in this state was on clear display. He refused to explain why the Liberal Party does not care that it is breaking its election promises. We know it has broken its election promise on tax. It promised to reduce taxation by \$250 million, which has not occurred; it is, in fact, increasing taxes on business and the community.

It also promised to do other things. These were not minor election commitments; they were election commitments in the area of health, education, and law and order. They are fundamental issues for every single citizen of this state, and this government has walked away from those commitments and is not prepared to be accountable through the proper processes of the Parliament. This is particularly galling coming from the Treasurer, who behaved in such an arrogant fashion in opposition and constantly made personal comments not about the performance of a person, but about the appearance and speech patterns and other matters about the individuals in the former government.

Mr T.R. Buswell: Who? When? Provide some evidence!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: And he continues with that same approach.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): Order, Treasurer!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: He continues with that same approach in the chamber when he makes personal attacks on members of the opposition when they make very reasonable and very important contributions to the debate. Rather than saying, “No, member, you’re wrong here, and I’ll show you where this is in the information I have provided to you”, all he does is stand and say, “I’m not answering that question.” That is a complete and utter disgrace.

As I said, 93 per cent of the information provided by the Treasurer about items in the appropriation at the time of the Treasurer’s Advance Authorisation Bill 2009 is incorrect. Only seven per cent of the information provided to this Parliament in the appropriation bill reflected the information the Treasurer provided to us at the time of last year’s TAA. That is not acceptable. It may be acceptable to the Treasurer to come into the chamber and not tell the truth, and it will be interesting to see what he says in his reply to the third reading debate.

What faith can we have in the information provided by the Treasurer this year? We know that, on the surface, it is wrong, because he has already had to hide from the media for five days because of his mistakes. He alone made those mistakes. He cannot blame the Department of Treasury and Finance, because there is only one Treasurer. He cannot blame the staff of the Parliament because, again, there is only one Treasurer. It is his responsibility to provide accurate information to this chamber, and he has failed in that obligation. He needs to table the memorandum that he provided to this side of the chamber, otherwise we will not be able to check that information against the appropriation bill next year. This is a lazy approach and a lazy attitude to governing.

Let us look at the Treasurer’s performance. For some reason or other, he is perceived by the media as being one of the more talented ministers of this government.

Mr F.A. Alban: He is!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The member for Swan Hills said “Hear, hear!”

Mr F.A. Alban: I see the fear in your eyes when he stands up!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: That is easy to do in a government with such a low level of capability. When the Treasurer is compared with the Minister for Water, the Minister for Education and the Minister for Police, of course he stands out. He is a giant amongst pygmies. It is easy to understand that. But when he is held to account for his own words when he was in opposition and the standards that he said should be applied to parliamentary service and the governing of this state, he is failing. He is failing, but he is happy to come into the chamber and make a joke and make an aside. I remind the chamber that on Tuesday night the Treasurer commented on things that Robert Ray has said about me; it is true that Robert Ray has said very unkind things about me. I have known Robert Ray for 25 years and his opinion of me has never changed. However, Robert Ray said interesting things about the Treasurer. Robert Ray stated —

Post the 2005 election, the Liberal Opposition was constantly unstable and led by unpopular politicians—one could say, totally unelectable.

All public opinion polls and ALP research demonstrated that Troy Buswell was regarded with contempt by the electorate; with many long-time Liberal voters refusing to vote for him.

Mr M.W. Sutherland interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): Excuse me, member. What was your comment, member for Mount Lawley?

Mr M.W. Sutherland: Nothing.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Robert Ray continued —

His refusal to stand aside artificially inflated Labor's support. His eventual decision to step down was almost certainly guided by disastrous Liberal internal polling.

Had an election been called with Buswell as Leader the Liberals would have faced a horrible choice—spend the first week of the campaign getting rid of him or suffering the consequences of an unelectable Leader.

I am always very happy for the Treasurer to come into this place and make personal comments about people and to quote from Robert Ray. However, he should do the honourable thing; he should be honest with the people of Western Australia and tell us, table the document, allow proper scrutiny, and not hide behind this dishonest tactic of not putting the information on the record and then have 93 per cent of that information proved wrong. The Treasurer should come into the chamber and tell us why it is that in health, education, and law and order, the Liberal Party has abandoned what it promised the community it would do and explain what is going to happen. He should come into this chamber and be honest for a change. If the Treasurer is happy to come into this place and abuse people, that is up to him and I will not stoop to personal abuse about his appearance or his weight or any of those things. I have never done that. I have not done that about any member of the government or any government backbencher, and I will not start now. However, I will come into this chamber and say that a lazy Treasurer who hides behind a dishonest approach to politics is not the sort of person who should be allowed to be the Treasurer of this state.

Question to be Put

MR J.E. McGRATH (South Perth) [11.13 am]: I move —

That the question be now put.

Question put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (28)

Mr P. Abetz	Mr M.J. Cowper	Dr G.G. Jacobs	Mr C.C. Porter
Mr C.J. Barnett	Mr J.H.D. Day	Mr R.F. Johnson	Mr D.T. Redman
Mr I.C. Blayney	Mr J.M. Francis	Mr A. Krsticevic	Mr A.J. Simpson
Mr T.R. Buswell	Mr B.J. Grylls	Mr W.R. Marmion	Mr M.W. Sutherland
Mr G.M. Castrilli	Dr K.D. Hames	Mr P.T. Miles	Mr T.K. Waldron
Mr V.A. Catania	Mrs L.M. Harvey	Ms A.R. Mitchell	Dr J.M. Woollard
Dr E. Constable	Mr A.P. Jacob	Dr M.D. Nahan	Mr J.E. McGrath (<i>Teller</i>)

Noes (22)

Ms L.L. Baker	Mr F.M. Logan	Mr J.R. Quigley	Mr A.J. Waddell
Mr J.J.M. Bowler	Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan	Ms M.M. Quirk	Mr P.B. Watson
Ms A.S. Carles	Mr M. McGowan	Mr E.S. Ripper	Mr M.P. Whitely
Mr J.N. Hyde	Mrs C.A. Martin	Ms R. Saffioti	Mr D.A. Templeman (<i>Teller</i>)
Mr W.J. Johnston	Mr M.P. Murray	Mr C.J. Tallentire	
Mr J.C. Kobelke	Mr P. Papalia	Mr P.C. Tinley	

Pairs

Mr F.A. Alban	Mr B.S. Wyatt
Mr I.M. Britza	Mr R.H. Cook

Question thus passed.

Third Reading Resumed

Question put and passed.

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY - Thursday, 18 March 2010]

p873c-881a

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Bill Johnston; Acting Speaker; Mr John McGrath

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.