

PUBLIC SECTOR EXPENDITURE — NEW GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Motion

Resumed from 23 June on the following motion moved by Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich —

- (1) That this house condemns the Premier as the minister for public sector management for wasting taxpayers' money in creating new government agencies, boards, committees and task forces at the same time as asking agencies to find savings of three per cent, resulting in the cuts to front-line services in health, education, and law and order.
- (2) That this house calls on the Premier to explain why a three per cent savings target is not a “big ask” for government agencies, as he stated to the recent Committee for Economic Development of Australia conference, given that the 2009–10 midyear review projected no savings and an expense growth of 13 per cent.

HON NORMAN MOORE (Mining and Pastoral — Leader of the House) [2.08 pm]: I had just about completed my remarks when we finished this matter last time, so I simply repeat that the government does not support the motion for the reasons I talked about some months ago.

HON KEN TRAVERS (North Metropolitan) [2.09 pm]: I want to say a few things about this and support the motion moved by Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich. I particularly want to focus on the creation of the new boards, committees and task force that this government has got involved in. When this government was first elected we heard that it was going to abolish all the unnecessary boards and committees and that this would be a new government that would get rid of them and we would not see the plethora of committees that existed in the past. In fact, in May this year the Premier made a major announcement about the boards and committees that have been abolished. He also pointed out that this government had set up 52 boards and committees. Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich's comments about the creation of new boards and committees were absolutely correct. Some 52 boards and committees were established by the Liberal government. There was a great song and dance about the number of committees that the new government would abolish. When we finally saw the list, we realised that one of the ways the government would abolish them was by redefining the definition of “committee”. That is how the government got rid of them. The government took them off the list because it no longer considered them to be committees. Therefore, the government could claim to have abolished them.

It is interesting that information has not been provided to this house about the number of boards and committees that have been either created or abolished. That information has been provided to the other place but it has not been tabled in this place. I believe that demonstrates the government's arrogance and shows the disrespect for, and the contempt in which it seems to hold, this chamber. It no longer sees it as a house of review and therefore does not bother to inform this chamber about what the government is doing. Nonetheless, some members on this side are resourceful and we have sought out the information that is available. I have a table that provides a list of how many boards and committees have been abolished. There is even a list of the boards and committees that require abolition through legislative change. This list was provided by the Premier to the other place and makes for fascinating reading. I have an interest in a number of areas and so I took the time to see which boards and committees this government intends to abolish as part of its campaign to reduce the number of boards and committees, noting that it has increased that number by 52. Under the sport and recreation portfolio, the government intends to abolish the Professional Combat Sports Commission. In light of the comments of the Leader of the House yesterday in answer to my question, maybe that is the new position of the government as a result of the Danny Green and Paul Briggs fight. I do not think it is or has ever been the government's position to abolish the Professional Combat Sports Commission. In fact, a government bill before the other place intends to expand the functions of the Professional Combat Sports Commission to make it the combat sports commission; it will actually have a bigger role. It can be argued that the government is abolishing the Professional Combat Sports Commission because the government is deleting the word “professional” as part of the legislation. However, the government is not abolishing the commission; it is expanding its role and operations.

The next item on the list is fascinating. It is the Western Australian Sports Centre Trust. Is it correct that the government is abolishing it? There are blank looks from members opposite. I agree with them. I doubt very much whether the government is planning to abolish that trust.

Hon Norman Moore: Who said we were?

Hon Ken Travers: It is on the list that was provided in the other place by the Premier. It is a list of the boards and committees that require abolition by legislative change. The Leader of the House has not provided that list to this house at this stage. That is the information that the government has provided to the people of

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Western Australia. The list shows that the government will abolish the Professional Combat Sports Commission and the Western Australian Sports Centre Trust.

Hon Peter Collier: That does not actually say they will be abolished. Does it not say that they are the boards that need legislative change to be abolished?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Yes, but there is more to it than that. If it was just a list of that sort, Hon Peter Collier, it would be a longer list of boards and committees that are established by an act of Parliament. This is a list of boards and committees that the government intends to abolish but needs legislative change to do it. That is what this list is. The member is right; it is a complete fraud.

I have referred to two boards and trusts. Some boards are listed under the racing and gaming portfolio. The members of the National Party should grab a copy of this list and then talk to the Minister for Racing and Gaming, who is a member of the National Party, and find out whether he knows whether the Gaming Community Trust, the Gaming and Wagering Commission of Western Australia, the Burswood Park Board and Racing and Wagering WA will be abolished.

Hon Michael Mischin: What is the source of that list? Where did you find it?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: It is a tabled paper in the other place. The member is absolutely right to ask, "Where would we find it?" We would not find it here because the government has not tabled it in this place.

Hon Michael Mischin: Who tabled it?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The Premier.

Hon Michael Mischin: Thank you; that is all I wanted to know.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The member is absolutely right; we are not able to have a proper debate in this place —

Hon Michael Mischin: I have not said anything about it, so don't agree with me that I am right.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The member was absolutely right —

Hon Michael Mischin: I was simply asking you what the source was.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The member was absolutely right to ask me about the source and he is absolutely right to ask me where it can be found. The member will find that it is not a tabled paper in this place. Maybe the member has not made this point yet, but if he did make the point that it should have been tabled in this place by the government, the member would be right about that too.

Hon Michael Mischin: Don't make points on my behalf, thank you.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Does the member think that it should have been tabled in this place?

Hon Michael Mischin: You're giving the speech; go ahead.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The member is happy for me to take his interjections when it suits him, but when I throw it back at him, he does not want to take it.

Hon Michael Mischin: I just wanted to know what the source was.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I am not happy that there are any interjections, let alone whether or not the member can take them. One member should be making a speech. I think Hon Ken Travers can handle it on his own; he does not need help from 16 others.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Thank you, Mr President. The member was absolutely right to ask me that question by interjection, even though interjections are disorderly. Members opposite are sitting in wonderment and asking where Hon Ken Travers has got this information from, because the government has not given us the courtesy of providing this house with information about the general operations of government. The government has not done that. That is disrespectful and a disgrace. If the member was going to ask me where he could get a copy of this list or why he could not get a copy of it from the Legislative Council Procedure Office, I would have agreed with him that it should have been made available to members of this place. One of the reasons that the government probably does not want it made available to this place as a tabled paper —

Hon Michael Mischin: What else was I going to say?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: That the Liberal government is hopeless and should be kicked out!

Hon Michael Mischin: You see; you are making it up as you go along, aren't you?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The member was not going to say that; he was just thinking it! That is fair enough. I think that Hon Michael Mischin is a reasonable man, and so I suspect that he probably was thinking that.

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This list has not been provided to this chamber. The other place might accept this sort of misinformation being provided to it, but I think it would have been a very serious matter if the government had given this place a list suggesting that all those boards and committees would be abolished —

Hon Donna Faragher: Are you saying that the members on your side of the house in the other place are not as good as you?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: No. I am saying that the way the other place operates is not as good as the way this place operates, Hon Donna Faragher. The other place does not operate as a house of review; it is a different environment. The way this place is developing under this government, it will become a mirror image of the other place whereby the government rules by having the required numbers. The government has formed a coalition and has a majority in this place and believes that it does not have to listen to anyone. This place will end up being like the other place at the rate we are going. I am still hoping that this government will prove to be an alliance government and not a coalition government, and that the National Party will stand up at some point and hold this government to account. I live in hope. I had a flicker of hope last night when Hon Philip Gardiner spoke in support of my motion, but then he voted against it. I got a flicker of hope that the coalition was going to break down —

The PRESIDENT: Order! I am waiting to hear a bit about public expenditure and new government agencies rather than commentary on something that is happening in some other place somewhere. Let us have a good look at the motion and speak to it.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Thank you, Mr President. It is a problem when one allows oneself to be led down another path by interjections. Nonetheless, this matter is very relevant to this debate because it is about the information that is provided to this house concerning the abolition of boards and committees. We have a very good case study of this. The point is that the government will continue to not give us information about the creation of departments or the abolition of boards and committees and all the information that we need to debate this motion properly while it continues to operate the way that it does.

As I was saying, I hope that we will be able to fulfil our role to hold the government accountable about the creation and abolition of boards and committees because we still have a chamber that will fulfil its role as it has in the past. However, that will require the National Party members to demonstrate to this chamber that they act independently of the government—that they are not in coalition; that there is a new form of government called an alliance government. So far, all we have seen is National Party members toeing the government line and acting as if they are in coalition. As I was saying, I thought there was a flicker of hope last night, but that was quickly blown out when we came to the vote.

Back to the list: I have already mentioned the Professional Combat Sports Commission of Western Australia and the Western Australian Sports Centre Trust. I am happy to be informed that it is on the government's agenda to abolish both, which according to this list it is going to do. But I suspect that it is the government's intention to expand the WA Professional Combat Sports Commission; that is, the new combat sports commission will look at not only professional combat sports, but all combat sports in Western Australia. That is not abolition; that is expansion.

Hon Helen Morton: Are you happy with that?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I am. I am not the one who said I was going to abolish them. It was the government who said that, Hon Helen Morton. With respect to the Western Australian Sports Centre Trust, I suspect that all that has happened is a change of trading name. The trust still exists as a trust; it now trades under the name of VenuesWest and not the Sports Centre Trust. That is not abolition; it is a change of trading name.

Hon Helen Morton: Did that change need legislation?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: No. Is Hon Helen Morton telling me the government is going to abolish the Sports Centre Trust? She is a member of the government. Is the government abolishing the Sports Centre Trust? I can tell her now that the Minister for Sport and Recreation does not know that is being done, even though it is on the Premier's list.

Hon Helen Morton interjected.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: That is what was on the Premier's list! I am happy to go through all those on the list. Is the government going to abolish the Gaming Community Trust? It is on the list. I do not think so! The Minister for Racing and Gaming is not aware that it is to be abolished, nor is anyone in his agency. Is the Gaming and Wagering Commission of Western Australia going to be abolished? I do not think so! The minister does not know about it, if it is. Does anyone on the other side think that it should be abolished? What about the Burswood

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Park Board and what about Racing and Wagering Western Australia? I know a lot of members on the other side have an interest in racing and wagering; do they think we should get rid of RWWA?

Hon Norman Moore: I am just wondering about the document.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Hon Norman Moore is right to be wondering about it. It would have been far better had it been tabled in this house and the same information provided to the other house provided to this house by the representative of the Premier in this house.

Hon Norman Moore: I am going to get a copy of that tabled paper to make sure you are not misleading the house.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I am happy to give a copy of the document to a chamber attendant who can copy it so that Hon Norman Moore can have a look at it. Perhaps, as a courtesy to the house, the Leader of the House will get a copy of the original document and table it in this house. Of course, the difficulty he will now have tabling that document in this house is that after I have said what I have said today and the Leader of the House tables that document still claiming it to be the list of boards and committees that his government intends to abolish, he will know that he will be misleading the house.

However, I challenge the Leader of the House to table that document and to give a statement similar to the one the Premier gave in the other place about the government's intentions to abolish boards and committees.

The PRESIDENT: Hon Ken Travers, to make it clear: have you tabled that document or are you seeking to table that document?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: No; I have given it to the attendant to photocopy so that a copy can be provided to the Leader of the House. In my view, it would be wrong of me to table that document because it is a document that the government should table. I am inviting the Leader of the House, who represents the Premier in this place, to —

Hon Norman Moore: You are inviting me! That is a change from challenging me!

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Invite or challenge.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: What do you prefer? Would you like a challenge or an invitation? Give us your preference.

Hon Norman Moore: Quite frankly, I do not care which it is.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: It would probably be highly unparliamentary to take off the gloves and slap them across Hon Norman Moore's face!

Hon Norman Moore: This is the sort of fight that Danny Green gets involved in!

Hon KEN TRAVERS: It is why we are two swords length away from each other across the chamber! We do not have those challenges anymore.

The PRESIDENT: Order. We do not want any fights lasting more than 29 seconds in this house.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Bring it on!

Hon Norman Moore: That was no fight, Mr President.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: We are here to please!

Hon Helen Morton: Or entertain.

Hon Norman Moore: Is that what you call it?

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: You're easy to please; you have a smile on your face.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The Premier tabled this list saying it was a list of the boards and committees that require legislative changes —

Hon Norman Moore: I am not quite sure that it says it is the government's intention to abolish them. It says that these are the boards and commissions that require legislative change to be abolished, if it is the decision to abolish.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: No; it is the list of those the government was going to abolish. Is Hon Norman Moore trying to suggest that these are the boards and committees the government is considering abolishing?

Hon Norman Moore: I have not seen the total document; you have given me part of a document. It may well be that this document lists those boards that require legislative change to abolish if the government decided to do so. I have not heard if the government has decided to do so.

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Hon KEN TRAVERS: According to the Premier's speech, the government was considering abolishing more than the boards and committees that appear on this list, but that these, according to my understanding, were the ones the government had decided to abolish.

Hon Norman Moore: That is why I want to see the total tabled paper.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Can I say that there is one on this list that —

Hon Michael Mischin: What date was that tabled?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: It was tabled on 19 May 2010; reasonably recently, Hon Michael Mischin.

Hon Michael Mischin: Thank you.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: So that members can understand, there are some boards and committees on this list that the government is abolishing—for example, the Hairdressers Registration Board. The bill to abolish that is before the house; I think we will deal with that a little later today. I suspect that this is the list. To confirm: government members do not know because they were not given this information by their own government—as we, the members of this house, were not given the information—and they are therefore not in the position to give us the answers we require. I understand their confusion about what is happening on the other side. It is not only this chamber that is not being properly informed, but members opposite who are clearly not being properly informed in the backrooms of Parliament House. Neither this chamber nor the government backbenchers are getting the information; they appear to be being treated with contempt. As I was saying, the government is abolishing the Hairdressers Registration Board, which is on this list.

Hon Norman Moore: Which you support.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I do not want to pre-empt the debate on that. We will get to that debate when we get to it. However, we know that the Hairdressers Registration Board is on the list to be abolished and that a bill is before the Parliament to do that.

It is also correct that the government is going to abolish the State Supply Commission, which is on this list. That is another one the government intends to abolish. In my view, that reinforces the argument that this is the list of boards and committees the government intended to abolish.

Hon Norman Moore: It does not say that at all. You cannot come to that conclusion at all.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: As I was saying, I invite or challenge Hon Norman Moore—in whatever way he wants me to put it—to make a statement to this house and to table this list and explain what it is. If it is not what I said it is —

Hon Norman Moore: It may well be, as I said before, a list of organisations that require legislative change to be abolished if the government decided to do so and has, in some cases, done. Indeed, if we look at Fisheries, this house has already agreed to abolish a couple of those.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: This was tabled along with a ministerial statement that explains the document. I am not going to quote from the *Hansard* in the other place. This is the difficulty that we have when information is not given to us but becomes public and on the record, in the broader sense. We have a problem when the government does not make the information available to this place; when it does not have the courtesy to make the same information available to this place as it does to the other place. We will constantly have members on the other side trying to challenge what this means. However, if a similar ministerial statement had been made by the Leader of the House at the same time the Premier made his statement, we would be able to refer to that statement in this place today to understand exactly what this list was all about.

Hon Norman Moore: So you are suggesting that you are not quite sure what it means.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: That is right. Some are on the list.

Hon Norman Moore: But you have drawn a conclusion as to what it means for the purpose of your argument.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The government is getting rid of some and not others.

Hon Helen Morton: Did you read the Premier's speech that was made at the time that was tabled?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The Premier's statement? Yes. Did the member?

Hon Helen Morton: I have just now, and I can tell you that some of the statements you're making don't seem to be consistent with what he stated.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I look forward to the parliamentary secretary standing, when I sit down, to correct me on where I have gone wrong. I look forward to it. I hope she does. She can explain to me what the Premier's statement, in relation to this tabled document, was meant to convey. If I do not understand the Premier's

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statement, I would like the member to feel free to stand and point out where I am wrong. This tabled paper has listed on it some boards and committees that we know the government is abolishing, but it also has others that the government is clearly not abolishing. Having read the Premier's speech, and having read this document, it is my understanding that this is the list of boards and committees that the government was going to abolish but needed legislative change to do so.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich interjected.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: If I am wrong, the parliamentary secretary should feel free to stand and put the record straight, because the member is absolutely right—this list, as it stands, is nonsense.

Hon Helen Morton: That is the way you're interpreting it. That's your interpretation.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I would love to know the correct interpretation, if my interpretation is not correct. Some of them are going and some of them are not.

Hon Norman Moore: The thing is, there's more than one tabled paper. I don't have access to the other two or three. We can't see the context in which this has been tabled.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The Leader of the House will be pleased to know that I have all four of the tabled papers.

Hon Norman Moore: Good on you. I'm at a slight disadvantage because I don't happen to have them.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The Leader of the House is only at a slight disadvantage because his government treated this house with contempt, so he should not have a go at me. His government, of which he is the leader in this place, treated this house with contempt; he should not suggest that I somehow have an unfair advantage over him. That is his problem and his government's problem, but it is good that we have highlighted to the house today that it creates problems for this house and the Leader of the House when this government treats the house with contempt on the issue of boards and committees. The government is trying to create an illusion and argue that it is abolishing boards and committees, but the real fact of the matter is that it has increased them. At the same time as it has increased them, it is pushing up the prices of power, water and other government charges across the board. It is removing payments from people across the board and it is cutting year 11 and 12 allowances in regional Western Australia. It is establishing boards and committees ad nauseam, and it is not getting rid of any of them. I would love the Leader of the House to explain this, because one of the documents the Premier tabled dealt with the status of boards and committees. It lists the number of committees for each portfolio under total committees, temporary committees, committees requiring legislative change, committees that have been abolished, committees for which there is a definition, and the balance.

Hon Helen Morton can look at the next paper that was tabled in the other place. It lists the boards and committees that were abolished, of which there are many, but when one actually goes through them, a large percentage of them are under the Department of Agriculture and Food. I have not gone through the list in any great detail, and members opposite might highlight for me those that have been abolished. In the areas in which I have a little knowledge about what goes on, such as sport and recreation, there is a list of boards and committees abolished as of March 2000. One of them is the trails reference panel; it is clearly listed on a document of boards and committees that were abolished as of March 2010. When the Department of Sport and Recreation came before the estimates committee of the upper house, I asked the director general about the trails reference panel. In fact, I also ran into someone who had been a member of the trails reference panel and asked him about it. Both of them were very surprised to learn that it had been abolished. In fact, when we had a debate with the head of the Department of Sport and Recreation about what the trails reference panel did—Hon Philip Gardiner might remember this debate—he replied that different agencies and other stakeholders with an interest came together to discuss what needed to be done with trails. I think that is a great idea; I support that. I think trails are important for Western Australia, and I think we should continue to grow them as we have for a number of years.

Hon Norman Moore: Since Mr President and I straightened it out.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The Leader of the House is so wonderful—he could sort that out, but he could not get the Premier to give him documents to table in this house that had been tabled in the other place! That is interesting. If any other members of the estimates committee believe that this is not an accurate reflection of the conversations we had as a committee, they should feel free to say so.

When we got to the debate about the trails reference panel, one of the things that was clearly said was that those agencies would still be brought together to talk to the stakeholders and discuss how to promote and develop trails in Western Australia. They were not aware that the committee had been abolished, and they were clearly going to continue with all the functions of the trails reference panel. When members of the government get up to explain how I was wrong about the other document, they might also want to explain how I am wrong about the

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trails reference panel and why it has been listed as having been abolished when the department does not even know about it and says that it will continue with that panel. Is it that the government has removed the word “committee” and will instead call it a “magical meeting of all the respective agencies and stakeholders”? What a laugh, what a joke, and what a dishonest way to treat the people of Western Australia. The government is arguing that it is abolishing committees when, in fact, it is not. The trails reference panel was not something that met on a regular basis; it was a fairly informal panel that met a couple of times a year. It did not cost anything, as far as I understand; it was not a committee for which anyone was paid a sitting fee. However, it has been included on a list of boards and committees that have been abolished by this government. Not only has it not been abolished, but its functions will still continue for the reason that there is still a need to do it; and good on it.

If we were to go through this list in even more detail than I have now, we would find that this document is as much a farce as the other documents. The Leader of the House might want to get hold of the fourth tabled paper and even update it for us. It is a list of boards, committees, reviews and task forces created between 23 September 2008 and 1 February 2010, and the cost of each. There is a long list of all the boards and committees that the government has set up since it came into office. I suspect that if we were to see a more recent, updated version, we would find that the numbers have increased even since that time.

The government came to this Parliament saying that it would do something about the number of boards and committees and that it would get rid of all the unnecessary ones. It also said it would trash good, hardworking members of committees. Remember when the government got stuck into the wives of the rock lobster fishermen?

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Yes, the wives. That’s right.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The government got stuck into that committee and tried to humiliate the good, hardworking people who participated in that committee, to try to create a political view that it is doing something about cutting the number of boards and committees. The government then tried to support that argument not only by changing the definition of “committee” but also by creating these documents. However, even after only a very quick look at these documents, we can identify that there is misinformation in these documents. It is a disgrace.

Hon Helen Morton: Misinformation?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Well, if I am wrong, stand and say so! If I was allowed, I would probably use stronger language. If it was not unparliamentary, I would probably use stronger language than that, Hon Helen Morton!

Hon Michael Mischin: What if you’re wrong—what are you going to do then?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Well, I would have to cop it sweet.

Hon Michael Mischin: Anything else?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I would have to live with the humiliation.

Hon Robyn McSweeney: Again!

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I am not sure about “again”. I cannot remember the last time it happened. It may have happened, but I do not recall. If I am wrong, I will have to live with the humiliation. If members opposite want to know what I will do if I am wrong, then I want to know what they will do if I am right. They are all attacking me for being right—what will they do if I am right?

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Of course you’re right!

Hon Liz Behjat: The oracle has spoken!

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The challenge has been thrown to me. What are members opposite going to do? Are they going to admit that their government is spreading misinformation? Are they going to help write a piece for *The West Australian* or something that we can distribute to the people of Western Australia? Is Hon Michael Mischin going to write something that says, “The government of which I am a member has misled you, the people of Western Australia, about what we are doing with boards and committees. We actually have not abolished boards and committees to anywhere near the degree that we claimed we were going to do. In fact, what we have been doing is creating boards and committees as fast as we possibly can.” That is the question we need to ask.

That brings me to one of the other things that goes on in this place. Hon Michael Mischin is lucky, because he has only ever served in this place in government. As members of the opposition, our access to resources and to information is nowhere near as good as it is for members of government. So, if it is the case that members opposite are able to demonstrate that I am wrong, in my view that would be embarrassing for me. However, it would reinforce one of my key messages from today’s talk; that is, if this information had been properly

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provided to this house, perhaps we all would have been better informed in the first place and perhaps we all could have followed up on that in the proper way. But that information was not provided to this house. That is because we have an arrogant government that treats the people of Western Australia with contempt.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Absolutely right!

Hon KEN TRAVERS: So, if I am wrong—I am not saying that I am; I am inviting members opposite to come forward and demonstrate that that is the case—as well as being humiliating for me, it will reinforce my message that the way this government is treating this house is appallingly wrong. But, if I am right, it will reinforce my message that not only is this government treating this house with contempt, but also it is treating its own members in this house with contempt. It will also confirm my message that this is a government that is more interested in creating spin than in creating substance.

Let us see what the end result is. I am more than happy to sit down now. I look forward to seeing a member on the government side stand and explain exactly what these papers mean. It will be fantastic to see that. However, I suspect that what we will see is a government that does not want to talk about this matter. I suspect that the government will not give us that explanation. All this government is interested in doing is creating spin. This government is not reducing the number of boards and committees; it is increasing them. This government is trying to manipulate the data to present an image that is clearly not there.

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Minister for Energy) [2.44 pm]: I would like to make some comments on this motion. Of course, as the Leader of the House has already articulated, we will not be supporting this motion. My comments will be specifically about one of my portfolio areas—training and workforce development—because that is an area about which Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich made some comments in her contribution to this debate. The motion states, in part —

That this house condemns the Premier as the minister for public sector management for wasting taxpayers' money in creating new government agencies, boards, committees and task forces ...

My comments will be about a new department that has been created. But is that a waste of taxpayers' money? Absolutely not.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Ask the Premier!

Hon PETER COLLIER: It is absolutely not a waste of taxpayers' money. In fact, it has been widely applauded—almost unanimously applauded—across the training and industry sectors throughout Western Australia. I am delighted to be the first minister of the newly created and first Department of Training and Workforce Development. I will give members a bit of history. In 2003, the then Labor government merged the Department of Training and the Department of Education. As a former educator, I think that was a seriously retrograde step. If anything, it diminished the role of training within the community. It did nothing to enhance the profile and reputation of the training sector. From what I understand, it certainly did not have the support of the then Department of Training or the then Department of Education, and even of some members, I have to say, of that government. But, having said that, that government made that decision.

When we came into office we decided to give training the profile that it so richly deserves. As I keep saying—it is almost a cliché, but it is a worthy cliché—as training is an entity in its own right there should be a dedicated department of training. We have reached the point in our education system where we have a Department of Education that is situated in East Perth, in what is commonly referred to as “Silver City”. That department does a very good job in providing education and training services. But the problem is that —

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon PETER COLLIER: Will Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich please be quiet!

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon PETER COLLIER: She is such an irritation!

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: She is like a doublegee; she really is! She is so irritating!

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich interjected.

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The PRESIDENT: Order! I have been counting the number of interjections. There have been four that have come out of nowhere. That is four too many. The minister has the call, and he should be given the opportunity to make his own remarks.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Thank you, Mr President. I have to say that I do not mind interjections; I really do not. It is just that this constant harping is really irritating. I would like to make my comments, and if the member has a genuine interjection, I will take it.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: That was not a genuine one! The member is not listening! She is a naughty girl!

Hon Ken Travers: You are so patronising!

Hon PETER COLLIER: I have not taught in a girls' school for some time, so that was an old habit, I can tell the member. Do not distract me.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon PETER COLLIER: Thank you, Mr President.

As a result of the changes to education, which we support and applaud—with the move towards the courses of study, and the need to provide more vocational education and training options within our school system it has become imperative that as a government and as a community at large we provide students in our education system who do not want to go to university and do not want to move into an academic pathway with the same opportunities and the same career paths as are provided to students who do want to go to university. Students who do not want to go to university should not feel in any way, shape or form diminished or subservient or a second cousin to those students who want to go to university. Let us not forget that year in and year out around 27 per cent of our students go to university. That means that around two-thirds of our students do not go to university. We need to provide avenues for those students. Unfortunately, due to the fact that training per se, as in a VET option, has often been seen as a second cousin to academic subjects, those students have not been given the same stimulus, the same motivation and the same encouragement not just from the education system but from the community at large, including their parents. This was the motivating factor behind our decision to provide a dedicated partner in the form of the Department of Training and Workforce Development. As a government we wanted to ensure that we sent an unambiguous message to students and to mature-age people throughout the community that a career pathway through training is a treasured possession. That is very important to me personally. It is very important to the government that we continue to give training status in the community. Training is getting the status it deserves, not just throughout the Western Australian community but also nationally and globally. People are starting to realise that a skilled workforce is absolutely essential, particularly given the exciting projects in place and on the drawing board in Western Australia in the foreseeable future. We do not want to get to the point where we were in the past decade when people took the easy option and moved to the North West or Mid West, earned obscene amounts of money in unskilled jobs and then found themselves unemployed once the boom came off.

We want to ensure that we look after the long-term future of our community and of our students, so that students leaving school want to go into training, become qualified and then move into a lifelong occupation that will open doors for them right across the globe. The government therefore made a very bold decision—I say a courageous but also innovative and visionary decision—to create a new department. I make no apology for that. We should not be condemned by Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich for that. In fact, as the opposition spokeswoman for training, she should have applauded the decision, but she has not. She has been constantly carping right throughout the community. In every media release and in every comment in the paper she has been carping about this new department. As I said, this new department has all but been endorsed unanimously by the community. We are rowing in the same direction. Everyone is speaking the same language: give training profile, status and recognition. But there is one lonely soul who just keeps on carping away and undermining everything that is done, and does nothing to enhance and encourage people who want to move into training. Regardless, we will continue.

As I said, I make no apology for that new department. As a representative of the government, I stand on that decision. The decision on the new department went through cabinet in August last year and it was established and created on 1 October last year. What a great day! The mood among people in the department was emphatic. It was tremendous. They felt ownership. They felt empowered that they were now getting recognition. They were not seen as some sort of hub of the previous Department of Education and Training. They had status. They had a dedicated department of their own, and decision making could be made in unison with industry to ensure that the needs of industry are met.

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I do not regard the new department—as Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich does—as a waste of money, because quite frankly it is not. No additional funding was involved, apart from funding for the new chief executive officer or managing director. It was also important to us as a government in the establishment of this new department to have a look at where we were going with training and whether we wanted to train people in isolation and say, “You go for it.” Of course not! That thinking is completely Neanderthal; it is completely oblivious to the demands of industry. If we are to meet the demands of industry we need to ensure that in training the community we provide valuable training opportunities for senior secondary students throughout our schools; opportunities for mature-age people who are unskilled but want to come back into the workforce; opportunities for single mothers who are perhaps coming back into the workforce; and opportunities for mothers who would like to come back into the workforce, having been out to raise children—or to fathers in a likewise situation. We must provide opportunities to all those individuals to move into employment right across the spectrum. We therefore looked at the issue and decided to expand the role of the Department of Training so that it would be not just a Department of Training, but a Department of Training and Workforce Development. That is important, because it is no longer—and should not any longer be seen as—a department solely dedicated towards training; it is not.

A significant component of the role of the new department is workforce development. It is not a title that is alien to Western Australia, I have to say; it is a title that is known right across the nation. We now have a federal government that is working towards workforce development; all the state Labor governments are working towards workforce development; we are working towards workforce development; but the state opposition has no shadow minister for workforce development. I do not know who oversees the opposition’s workforce development policy formation.

Now that we have the new Department of Training and Workforce Development, the two sections work together. The Department of Training and Workforce Development is forensically listening to the needs of industry, developing plans and ensuring that the workforce that we are training meets the needs in those critical skill areas. This is so we do not train people ad nauseam and provide opportunities that essentially lead nowhere. Our public funding goes into directions to ensure that we provide employment opportunities where they are most needed. That is so very important, and it is why workforce development is so very important.

I am proud and pleased that I was appointed chair of the national Workforce Development, Supply and Demand Principal Committee. I was appointed by the current Prime Minister and I am delighted with that. It shows just how significant —

Hon Ken Travers: She’s a good woman; isn’t she?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I have a lot of respect for the Prime Minister; I really do. I am not quite sure that she is effective as Prime Minister.

Hon Ken Travers: So, are you saying she appointed a dud as the chair?

Hon PETER COLLIER: It has been a terrific opportunity for me and a terrific opportunity for Western Australia. Again, it provides status and prestige for Western Australia. The rest of Australia is looking to Western Australia for leadership and vision of where we are going for a skilled workforce.

I therefore make no apology for establishing the new Department of Training and Workforce Development. As I said, the government has listened to the needs of industry, the government has listened to the training sector, and that is why we have our new department. To suggest that it is a waste of money is ignorant in the extreme.

Hon Ken Travers: Industry keeps telling me that it is still not addressing the issues of workforce development, though.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Hon Ken Travers might be listening to the wrong areas of industry.

Hon Ken Travers: No; they are pretty interested in the future of Western Australia.

Hon PETER COLLIER: If Hon Ken Travers has some concerns, he should bring them into this chamber or speak to me personally. I am more than willing to listen. My door is always open. I have constant contact with the leaders of industry and with the union movement. This is not a political speech; this is fact. The unambiguous, transparent and unanimous message that comes back to me is that we are on the right track. We are working together. The notion of having a department covering both facets has been embraced. Industry is salivating at the prospect of actually being part of the decision-making process. We are showing the leadership; industry is providing the impetus as well. As far as the department is concerned, that is a good thing; not just for training in itself, but also for the message it sends to school students right across the community—there are some in the public gallery at the moment. I say to those students who are considering a career pathway through training: do so, embrace it and open your hearts because it is a wonderful career pathway; it really is. Students who move into a subject choice in years 11 and 12 that is not necessarily academically focused should not feel in

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any way diminished because they are doing that—I can tell them that right now—because it provides wonderful opportunities in life.

As far as the second part of the motion goes with regard to new agencies, boards, committees et cetera, I will comment on a couple of areas that Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich has made comment on in the past 18 months or so. I have a pretty robust but, I think, vibrant and effective relationship with Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich, but some of the clichés I am constantly referred to as are “sneaky” and “tricky”. I have a thick skin and it does not really bother me, I have to say. A perfect example is contained in one of the media releases, which I alluded to recently. I will mention this example before I get on to talk about the boards and committees. I have mentioned before that Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich issued a media release quoting the now Prime Minister. Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich must be very proud of this media release. She said —

Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard told a CCI event last week that since September 2008, 38,000 people had become disengaged with training in Western Australia, including 15,000 teenagers and 23,000 young adults.

What garbage! I was at that lunch; Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich was not. Julia Gillard said nothing of the kind. I had a very good working relationship with Julia Gillard when she was the training minister and I was staggered when I saw this media release. I said to myself that I was at that lunch and she said nothing of the kind. We got the speech. Of course, she did not say that. She said —

In the 12 months to April 2010, there were around 38,000 disengaged young people in Western Australia (around 15,000 teenagers, and 23,000 young adults).

There is such a thing called poetic licence but I would regard that as tricky and sneaky. Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich has adjusted the comments of Julia Gillard and put in “since September 2008”. We do not need a PhD to work out why she changed it to September 2008. Who got elected in 2008? The Liberal–National government. She changed that. She is smiling because I know what she was up to. She added the words “with training”. Who has been tricky and sneaky? Not me. I have a host of these examples. I could stay all day but I will not bother as we have a couple of training motions that I will have a field day with in a couple of months or whenever we get to them.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: I don’t know about you but I can’t wait.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Neither can I! We could sell tickets to this place when that comes on. People will be lining up.

I move to boards and committees et cetera from my agency. I copped a bit of a shellacking during the contribution of Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich, which was unjust. I think I have more than adequately covered the area —

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I know I am being a bit precious. Let us look at a couple of comments made about my department concerning wastage of funds et cetera. There was no wastage of funds. As I said, I have more than adequately presented a case to justify why we created a new department. If Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich wants to continue harping on about it, she really is a “Nelly No Friends”. She needs to listen to the needs of those within the training sector.

Having said that, let us look at the industry training advisory boards. They were around when Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich was training minister. There were 14 of them. The general consensus from industry was that they were not as effective as they possibly could be. There needed to be some changes and they needed to be streamlined and condensed to ensure that they represented industry. Those recommendations came from a group called the Skills Formation Taskforce. Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich will be very conscious of that because she was responsible for it. The former government did not do anything about it when it was in office. When I became the minister, I said that we must listen to the needs of industry.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: You didn’t come out with an original idea. You are still trotting out our policies.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Not at all. Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich criticised it. I announced the formation of 10 industry training councils. Next we get one of those pearls from Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich that keep us awake at night. She put out a media statement on Saturday, 14 March 2009 headed “Training blueprint lacks direction and vision”. I will read part of it. It states —

The Barnett Liberal Government has released an inadequate training policy containing nothing new but boards and committees, Shadow Training Minister Ljiljanna Ravlich said today.

I do not know why because I had not created anything at that stage. It continues —

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“The training sector should feel disappointed at the lack of vision, insight and understanding displayed by the Minister,” she said.

Here is the pièce de résistance —

“He has approved new arrangements that will see a network of ten independent industry training advisory bodies being set up, a new Construction Industry Construction Training Council, an additional six training councils to commence in February and three others expected to be operational soon.

“These new advisory boards are being established at the same time as Premier Barnett seeks to half the number of boards and committees by 50 per cent.”

According to this media release, I have 10 independent training advisory boards, a new construction industry training council, an additional six training councils—that is 17 so far—and three others, so we have 20 boards according to this media release. That is not the case. We actually listened to industry, we looked at the recommendations regarding which ITABs were working ineffectively and inefficiently and we created 10 industry training councils. Those industry training councils are terrific; they are working so well. They are very representative of a broad cross-section of industry right across the state. I will mention a few of them. I will not go through the whole list because it is quite extensive. For example, the Community Services, Health and Education Training Council looks at things such as education and health community services; the Building and Construction Industry Training Council looks at building and construction; the Electrical, Utilities and Public Administration Training Council looks after public administration and safety, electrical and so on, town planners, electrical engineers et cetera; the Engineering and Automotive Training Council Incorporated looks after automotive electricians, motor mechanics, motorcycle mechanics et cetera; and there is the Food, Fibre and Timber Industries Training Council. That is five of them, but members get the picture. They were condensed collectively. Again, we listened to the representative industry groups, the stakeholders, and asked them what they wanted. This is what they wanted.

Those industry training councils have been phenomenally successful. Industry can no longer complain that it does not have a voice. I have met individually with each of those 10 councils. I am now on my second round. They have been in existence for less than two years. I meet with them, my department regularly has contact and interaction with them and my own office has regular contact with them. They are working well. They are assisting with the skilled migration strategy. We are ensuring that we provide training for particular areas of need. That works very, very effectively. We do not just train for the sake of training; we are training to ensure that we do meet those skill needs. Those industry training councils have worked very, very well. They were not an expansion of boards or committees or whatever; it was a contraction from 14 to 10. They are much more efficient and much more streamlined. It puts paid to the notion of Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich; she was wrong.

Hon Ken Travers: It’s interesting because on the list of boards and committees, under the list abolished for your portfolio, which is listed as energy and training, not workforce development, it says you abolished only two boards, according to the Premier. You are saying you have abolished more than that.

Hon PETER COLLIER: We need to update that. I can add to that. It has reduced from 14 to 10.

Hon Ken Travers: What were the two that the Premier listed for you, do you think?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I do not know what those two are in that instance. I can certainly find out. All I am concerned about at this stage is that those ITABs were not working as effectively. We have made them much more effective and efficient.

I will make a few more comments on the actual department because it has been given a battering by Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich that, again, I feel is unjustified. I do not mind if there is an issue or something that we need to improve on. To have this constant carping about the department is really galling because it is unjustified. I will give a couple of examples that have occurred over a period of time. On 23 March 2010 Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich put out a media statement headed “Minister needs to explain lost apprenticeship places”. It states —

The Barnett Government has:

...

- Returned only \$47.3million over three years to fund training in the budget;

I find it extraordinary that a former Minister for Training would suggest that we are going to provide \$47.3 million over three years. Surely she could not be that ignorant of the facts. Either that or she is being tricky or sneaky, or perhaps a combination. I suggest that in this instance it is mischief making in the extreme; it is inaccurate; it is wrong; and it is deficient for an alternative minister. It continues —

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- Squandered a large part of this meager training budget —

That is the \$47.3 million —

on setting up the new Department of Training and Workforce Development and rebadging and renaming TAFEWA Colleges;

That is absolute garbage. Not one cent of that \$47.3 million went into the new department. It did not cost anything for the new department. I cannot believe that Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich actually said that. It was absolute rubbish.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Was the Premier happy about you rebadging of TAFE colleges?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Absolutely.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: So he was happy to have you spend the money rebadging the TAFE colleges?

Hon PETER COLLIER: It was not for rebadging the TAFE colleges; not one cent of the \$47.3 million went to rebadging.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: You just said that the Premier was happy for you to spend money rebadging the TAFE colleges.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I did not rebadge the TAFE colleges.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Yes, you did.

Hon PETER COLLIER: No; I gave the authority to. It came from within the TAFE's operating budget.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: That is fine; you have just put it on the public record. Keep going.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I will keep going.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: The Premier was happy; that is all right. People cannot turn on their heaters, but you are happy to have a Premier who is happy to rebadge your TAFE colleges; well that's fine.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I have taken Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich's interjection. I will not do that any more. We did not spend a large part of the \$47.3 million on setting up the new department and rebadging. It is rubbish to say that. In fact, we spent more than \$400 million on training last year on just service delivery. The \$47.3 million was a stimulus package, and I will get back to that in a moment.

On 11 September 2009 Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich released another statement headed "No good news for apprentices as Barnett spends more on spin". It reads —

"The Barnett Government will spend \$4 million on a lavish advertising campaign for its new Department of Training and Workforce Development as thousands of apprentices and trainees are forced to look for work".

She states further on —

The Barnett Government has created another new Government department without allocating any extra funding and will spend \$4 million on a spin campaign to convince the public it isn't neglecting trainees and apprentices across the State,

We did not spend one cent of the \$4 million on the rebadging of the new department. That \$4 million went to advertising for training. Do you know what, Mr Deputy President (Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm)? If Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich had seen the newspapers, watched television and listened to the radio for months on end, she would have seen and heard those advertisements. The direct result is that we have been inundated with people who are moving towards training. It has been an overwhelming success. Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich said the same thing again recently. I cannot believe she keeps on saying this. On 6 May 2010 the Albany Advertiser quoted her as follows —

There are that many students who are clearly at risk or have been at risk. The minister had spent \$4 million on advertising and promoting the new department himself, while at the same time there is a constant struggle to meet the most basic requirements.

I will put on the public record for at least the twentieth time that not one cent of that \$4 million went to the new department. It went to the advertising of training opportunities for people throughout Western Australia. As a direct result of that our public and private providers have been inundated with people who want to undertake training.

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Hon Ken Travers: Did it have your picture on it?

Hon PETER COLLIER: No; it did not.

Hon Ken Travers: Are you sure?

Hon PETER COLLIER: It did not. I can send members a picture if they like.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: I see squares all over the place.

Hon PETER COLLIER: These interjections are unruly, Mr Deputy President, so I will not take them.

We then heard constant carping about the rebadging of the TAFEs. I yet again emphasise that that was done with the overwhelming support of the public providers and the community at large. It is very easy to explain the reason for that. A stigma was attached to our TAFE colleges at large. That is a statement of fact.

Hon Ken Travers: What?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Let me finish. Do not pass a value judgement.

Hon Sue Ellery interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I can assure members opposite that if they spoke to any child in years 11 and 12, they would find that unfortunately there is a stigma attached to the notion of going to TAFE.

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Can I just finish? Hon Ken Travers has had his say; I did not interject on him.

Hon Sue Ellery interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is a cliché from Hon Sue Ellery. She has lost the plot since she has been in opposition.

Hon Sue Ellery: That is an extraordinary thing to say.

Hon PETER COLLIER: She has; it is true. She used to be quite reasonable.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members!

Hon PETER COLLIER: I wanted to make sure our public providers got the recognition that they so desperately deserved. I said to our TAFE colleges, our state public providers, “I want you to rise in status and prestige and become independent centres of excellence; I want you to market yourselves and provide opportunities of excellence for training throughout the state.” Again, they rose to the occasion. They were delighted to embrace that. I said that I would give them as much autonomy as they wanted so that they could become independent training organisations. I said, “You can send an unambiguous message to our community at large that you are independent centres of excellence and not necessarily connections to TAFE institutions.” They have done that.

Hon Ken Travers: Are you saying West Coast Institute of Technology was not a centre of excellence?

Hon PETER COLLIER: Let me finish. Each one of our state training providers has been rebadged. There are still the Pilbara and the Kimberley providers to go at this stage. But each one of the others has done that. Polytechnic West, Challenger Institute of Technology, Central Institute of Technology, Durack Institute of Technology, West Coast Institute of Training and Great Southern Institute of Technology have taken the banner and risen to the occasion. I am delighted with our state training providers; they are wonderful institutions. I would like students throughout our education system to take the time to go into our state training providers and see what opportunities are available. They do not have to think that they are somehow subservient if they do not do a TEE course in years 11 and 12. I want them to see what wonderful opportunities are available and endorse the great work that is already being done.

Hon Ken Travers: That is what was happening before. Are you saying West Coast Institute of Technology did not do a good job before and was not held in high regard?

Hon PETER COLLIER: No; I am not at all. Hon Ken Travers has an amazing capacity to preach something and have someone else take responsibility for it. I will not do it. I will answer his question.

Hon Ken Travers: I am asking about West Coast Institute of Technology’s performance in the past. You are saying that it was not a centre of excellence.

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Hon PETER COLLIER: I am doing nothing of the sort. I will respond to that because Hon Ken Travers is getting into an indignant rage, which fools nobody.

Hon Sue Ellery: I probably do not disagree with you that in the minds of some, TAFE was viewed as having, I guess, less status than a university course. That probably was the case in the minds of some. It was not and is not the case for the majority. Year after year at school graduations, as I am sure have many other members, I have seen students receive the dux in the VET stream with great pride and parents filled with the sort of pride that goes with their children achieving. I know in my own electorate, for example, that Challenger —

Hon PETER COLLIER: If you have an interjection —

Hon Sue Ellery: Minister, Challenger Institute of Technology has done a fantastic job for many years. It is currently doing a great job. It is not true to say that its status was low. That is snobbery.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Okay, fine, that is enough now. Good try, but I say that is enough. If Hon Sue Ellery wants to speak, she can stand up at the end.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm): Order! I suggest to you, minister, that if you want to take interjections, do so. Right from the very outset you have been saying yes to some and no to others, and it makes it very difficult for Hansard and yours truly to follow the debate. You either take interjections or you do not. That would be my recommendation.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Fair cop.

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Given you have only about 12 minutes left, I suggest that for the remaining 12 minutes, if you do not want interjections, do not take any of them. I will certainly support you.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I would appreciate that. I will not take any further interjections, Mr Deputy President.

Hon Ken Travers: Because you are embarrassed by them.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I make the point yet again, and I put on the public record, that, contrary to the nonsense that has been thrown at me in the past 10 minutes, I have tremendous faith in each one of our state training providers. The simple fact of the matter is that the vast majority of students do not do vocational education and training subjects. It would be really good if they chose to do VET subjects, as opposed to just assuming that they had to go through the academic stream. In a lot of instances, that is irrelevant to them. I want to see more interaction between our education system, our schools and our state training providers to ensure that the message to students in years 10, 11 and 12 is that VET is a wonderful career pathway for those students. The West Coast Institute of Training is a magnificent institution that provides wonderful training opportunities. Unfortunately, the vast majority of our students do not know what goes on there because they are not provided with that vantage point. It is exactly the same with training. A lot of that comes from the fact that training has been deemed to be subservient. I do not want that to continue to be the case. I want to get to the point at which we have an ethos throughout our school system and our community at large that a career pathway through training is a treasured possession. That is why we have rebadged the state training providers, and they have done that enthusiastically. They are starting to become centres of excellence in the specific areas in which they specialise. They provide a raft of different career opportunities by specialising in particular areas, just as a lot of our universities do.

Not only Western Australia, but also the world underwent a significant economic downturn recently. The very first thing to occur as a result of that was that employers either laid off or did not put on apprentices. That was commonplace across the globe. That has always been the case in an economic downturn. Western Australia is no different from anywhere else in Australia. In fact, the figures for Western Australia are better than those for the rest of Australia. Results from the National Centre for Vocational Education and Research show that the decline in traineeships and apprenticeships between June 2008 and December 2009 was 2.92 per cent in Western Australia and 4.68 per cent across Australia. I am asked about what is happening with apprentices and why there has been a decline in the number of apprentices. When there is a global downturn, the very first thing to happen is a decline in the number of apprenticeships. That is commonplace; it is not alien to Western Australia. The good part is that we introduced the stimulus package and, as a result, we have been inundated with enrolments. Apprenticeship commencements from the end of June 2009 to June 2010 increased by 26.8 per cent. That is phenomenal. That means that employers are starting to employ more people. Almost 400 more employers are now involved in apprenticeships than were involved previously. Obviously that package is working and the tactics that we put in place are working.

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We also provided more than \$17 million in fee exemptions for the unemployed. We told unemployed people, including a large number of unskilled workers from the North West and Mid West, that if they moved into training, we would provide fee exemptions for them. More than 7 000 previously unemployed people are now directly involved in training and gaining lifelong career opportunities for themselves. Those tactics are working.

Rather than having a negative impact on training, the creation of a new department has had a positive impact on training. I make no apologies for creating a new department. It did not cost us any additional money but it gave training the status it so richly deserves. We reduced the number of Western Australian industry training advisory bodies from 14 to 10, which was a very positive step forward. We also reduced the Employment Directions Network centres from 23 to 14. That is much more manageable. They are workforce development centres that will interact with industry across the state to ensure that the industry needs of the state are met. We have been very proactive. At this stage, I sincerely feel that the measures that we have put in place in training over the past two years have been extraordinarily positive and very effective. Rather than be condemned for those actions, I think we should be applauded.

HON MAX TRENORDEN (Agricultural) [3.25 pm]: I read this motion with a great deal of interest. I want to speak for some time on paragraph (2) of the motion, which reads —

That this House calls on the Premier to explain why a three percent savings target is not a “big ask” for government agencies, as he stated to the recent Committee for Economic Development Australia conference, given that the 2009–2010 midyear review projected no savings and an expense growth of 13 per cent.

I thought I would read from the *2009–10 Government Mid-year Financial Projections Statement*. Guess what? It is nothing like 13 per cent. If members read the results, they will see that it says that in 2009–10, the expense growth is expected to be 6.6 per cent and in 2010–11, it is expected to be 2.4 per cent. That is somewhat short of the 13 per cent mentioned in the motion. I took the liberty of reading the budget papers for 2010–11, and it actually comes in at 3.9 per cent. Where did the opposition get the figure of 13 per cent? We have for a considerable time been debating a nonsense. Show me in the budget papers where the projected figure of 13 per cent is. Page 14 of the *2009–10 Government Mid-year Financial Projections Statement* states under “Expenses: 2009–10”—

General government expenses in 2009–10 are estimated to be \$20.8 billion, \$543 million (or 2.7%) higher than budget. Growth in expenses in 2009–10 is now estimated at 9.0% —

Not 13 per cent —

up from the budget estimate of 6.6%.

This increase reflects parameter changes, with post-budget policy decisions expected to reduce expenses by a total of \$119 million in 2009–10 ...

Explain to me, Hon Ken Travers, where the 13 per cent came from. It is not in the *Government Mid-year Financial Projections Statement*.

Hon Ken Travers: Did I say 13 per cent?

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: It is in the motion.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: It is my motion.

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: It is in the motion that we are debating. I will give it to the member.

Hon Ken Travers: What was the final expense growth in the budget that came down?

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: Let me read it to the member. In 2008–09, it was 13.5 per cent; in 2009–10, it was 12.3 per cent; and in 2010–11, it was 3.9 per cent.

Hon Ken Travers: The figure for 2010–11 is the projected growth. What was the figure for 2009–10?

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: Do not argue with me; just read it.

Hon Ken Travers: What was it in 2009–10?

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: In 2009–10, it was 12.3 per cent.

Hon Ken Travers: That is pretty close to 13 per cent.

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: Let me read what the motion says. It says from the “midyear review”. It does not refer to the final one. The opposition has said that it is in the midyear review.

Hon Ken Travers: Look at the date of the motion.

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Hon MAX TRENORDEN: I did. The opposition projected ahead by one year.

Hon Ken Travers: We got it right; it came in at 13 per cent.

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: It did not.

Hon Ken Travers: It did; you just admitted that it was 12.3 per cent. You keep predicting low but you keep delivering high.

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: This is the midyear review that the member is talking about.

Hon Ken Travers: Hon Ljiljana Ravlich moved the motion, but go on.

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: This is the paper, and according to the paper the budget estimate was 6.6 per cent and the midyear revision was 9.0 per cent. Projecting forward one year, the figure is 2.4 per cent. That is in the review papers. Where is this debate coming from? Is it reasonable to assume that if the opposition got that part wrong, it might have got the first part wrong as well? Is it reasonable to assume that we probably should not go to the Premier and ask about the issues raised by those opposite in respect of the first point? They might not be right either.

Hon Ken Travers: So we were wrong because we accused you of getting 13 per cent expense growth when you only got 12.3 per cent? I am sorry; on behalf of Hon Ljiljana Ravlich I apologise for that 0.7 per cent of an error! The second-highest ever expense growth for a state government, beaten only by the year before.

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: The only problem is, the member is out by a year; the only slight problem is that she is out by 12 months. That is a small, itchy-bitsy problem. She is 12 months out.

Hon Ken Travers: Because you've got two years of expense growth at 13 per cent. Beat me with a wet lettuce!

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm): Members!

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: Mr Deputy President, I agree that this is turning into a farce.

Hon Ken Travers: No wonder they kicked you out of the lower house, Max!

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: Exactly; I do not mind that argument, either!

The point is that this motion is ridiculous. If we look at the 2009–10 paper, the member is actually out by 0.7 per cent. That is not a minor amount.

Hon Ken Travers: But it's right compared to what you actually delivered for the year.

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: If that is going to be the argument, the member cannot say to the Minister for Training and Workforce Development that several things have happened since his previous press release. It is the same argument. If the opposition is allowed to be out by a year, why are we not allowed to be out by a year?

Hon Ken Travers: Because you're the ones with the rampant expense growth that you can't control.

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: It is 3.9 per cent. The opposition never got anywhere near that. In fact, I would love to have the time to flick back through the previous government's expense rates; it probably did not get under 10 per cent.

Hon Ken Travers: We were having challenges earlier. Are you confident that your government will come in on 3.9 per cent expense growth? What are you prepared to put on it? Will you resign if you don't make it?

Point of Order

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: This is fascinating stuff to some, perhaps, but I find it tedious. It is turning into an argument across the chamber rather than an address to the chair.

Hon Ken Travers: Hon Max Trenorden does not need your defence!

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I am looking at my mental health, not his!

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The point I make to members of the chamber is that Hon Ljiljana Ravlich has a right of reply for 15 minutes at the end of this debate, or even next week. I make that particular point known to Hon Max Trenorden, and maybe it is something that Hon Ljiljana Ravlich can take on board. As for all members of the chamber, comments should always be passed through the Chair.

Debate Resumed

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: Thank you, Mr Deputy President. I do not want to take up any more of the time of the house. I point out that if the opposition cannot get the motion and the debate right, why should we listen? The reality is that I think Hon Ljiljana Ravlich made a mistake with the dates, but that is not the point; we are

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debating a particular motion. If Hon Ken Travers wants to have a little wager with me—which is probably against the spirit of this house—he can take 13 per cent and I will take 3.9 per cent, draw it down the middle and draw a bottle of wine on either side of the process.

Hon Ken Travers: So you accept it will be above 3.9 per cent?

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: Yes, but in the same burst of laughter, is the member going to accept that it will be above 13 per cent? What is good for the goose is good for the gander!

Hon Ken Travers: I am happy to take the bet that it will be closer to 13 per cent than to 3.9 per cent.

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: We will record that in *Hansard*, which is not an appropriate place to record members' personal wagers!

I spent many years in opposition, and one of the problems of being in opposition is being accurate. In this case, the opposition has not been accurate. We have debated this matter for quite some time, and I would suggest that we should have taken no notice. If the opposition cannot get its motion correct, why should we listen to this debate?

HON MICHAEL MISCHIN (North Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary) [3.35 pm]: I rise only to make some comments in response to the address made by Hon Ken Travers. As it happens, it comes down to the question of accuracy. Hon Ken Travers found some papers that had been tabled in the other place, drew some conclusions from them, interpreted for us the Premier's comments regarding those documents and structured an entire argument on those premises. He harangued the government in his usual ardent, strident and trenchant way and whipped himself into a feverish pitch.

Hon Ken Travers: Do you get a prize for the number of adjectives you use?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: It was a very passionate argument, but as usual it was also very inaccurate, and it needs to be corrected. It was interesting to see the way that it flowed; he managed to get himself into quite a state at one stage, to a point where he was repeating his argument endlessly, and he fell into some kind of loop. In the end, after a moment of reflection caused by some interjections, it sounded more like a plea of mitigation. He said that the government has more resources at its disposal than the opposition and that we should not expect the opposition to be right.

The only resources I plan to draw on in answering those propositions are two. I might suggest to Hon Ken Travers that if he has questions relating to the abolition of committees and boards, he could always ask the question; it has been known to happen before. Secondly, he might want to refer to *Hansard*. Although ordinarily I would be reluctant to do so, it is necessary to quote what the Premier said about these documents when he tabled them. I say "these documents" because we have only seen one and not the others that formed part of the package. I quote from *Hansard* of 19 May in the other place. It is a statement by the Premier. He stated —

On forming government in September 2008, one of the many questions I asked was: how many boards and committees are there in government? This was a simple question but evidently one that could not be easily answered.

There were the usual interjections from members in the other place, and the Speaker had to call them to order; it sounds very much like this place. The Premier continued —

There was a database of boards and committees but it was clearly out of date. We believed that the public had a right to know fully about the number of boards and committees that exist, and therefore we set about identifying how many boards and committees there are in government. In undertaking this task, we identified a board or committee as an entity upon which one or more members were external to the agency that the board reported to. The initial review identified some 1 276 boards and committees.

Boards and committees play an important role in government. They provide independent and expert advice, and when used well provide a good link between the government and the community. The Liberal-National government has also set up some 52 boards and committees since coming to office, but is mindful of the need to trim the overall number. Following a review of boards and committees, some 219 have been abolished effective immediately, 44 more will be abolished when their term expires and will not be reinstated, and 63 will require legislative change to abolish. In total, 326 boards and committees have been or will be abolished.

The investigation also identified the need for a clearer definition which is now —

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... an entity that has one or more external members who receive remuneration for their services (other than reimbursements or travel). The term external members covers any member not on the public payroll.

In the final analysis, taking into account boards and committees that have been abolished, and those that do not fit the new definition, we will have approximately 628 boards and committees. The number will be reduced to approximately 500 once we take into consideration those boards and committees that have a fixed term and those to be abolished by legislative change. This is less than half the number of boards and committees identified when we came to office.

There is still much more to be done. The existence, purpose, membership, remuneration and term of boards and committees should be transparent. To achieve this outcome, I have asked the Public Sector Commission to overhaul the existing database of boards and committees and to develop an accessible and current database that is freely available to the community. This continues to reaffirm the Liberal-National government's commitment to openness, accountability and transparency in operations of the state.

I take this opportunity to point out that this reduction has been achieved by the government's first review of boards and committees. There is more work to be done, and it will be done in order to achieve even greater reductions through means covering abolishment and possible amalgamations of a number of boards and committees as required.

He then goes to table the documents, saying —

I now table the following information, but note that with all of this data some caution must be exercised as there was no up-to-date central database, so the information has been compiled from multiple sources and over different time periods. I table the status of boards and committees, boards and committees abolished, boards and committees requiring legislative changes to abolish—there are some exclusions as discussions are ongoing—and information on remuneration requested in a question without notice on 6 May 2010.

He then tables a bundle of papers numbered 2103 through to 2106.

We have been presented with tabled paper 2105, which is headed "Boards and Committees Requiring Abolishment Via Legislative Change". I do not know why it does not say "abolition". It may well be that it was in the Premier's mind that those were to be abolished; it seems surprising, given some of them. However, the document purports to identify only those boards and committees that require some kind of legislative change before they can be disposed of, and that is what was tendered on the day.

Document number 2103 was also presented. It contained a list—I have not counted them, but there are several pages—of committees. The document is titled, "Boards and Committees Abolished as at March 2010." A document headed, "Status of Boards and Committees" listed by various departments the number of boards and committees identified and whether they were temporary; whether legislative change was required for them to be disposed of; and whether they had been disposed of and the like. Lastly, a list of several pages headed, "Boards, Committees, Reviews and Taskforces Created ...", lists those bodies that had been created by the government between 23 September 2008 and 1 February 2010, and the cost of each.

The issue was further explored by a question without notice on 15 June 2010. A question to the Premier referred to these documents. The questions starts —

I refer to the documents that the Premier tabled in the house in April in which he detailed the boards and committees this government has abolished and those that it intends to abolish into the future.

Several parts to the question were asked —

- (1) Does the Premier stand by those documents that he prepared with meticulous care over a long time as being accurate?
- (2) If so, when will the Premier be introducing legislation to abolish Racing and Wagering Western Australia, the Gaming Community Trust, the Gaming and Wagering Commission of Western Australia, the Burswood Park Board and the Greyhound Racing Association?
- (3) If the documents are not accurate, can the Premier advise the house which parts need definitional change?

The Premier responded —

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- (1)–(3) When, through a brief ministerial statement, I tabled that document on the number of boards and committees, I pointed out—not the point raised by the member for Rockingham—that one of the great difficulties in this area was that there was no database. There was no accurate listing of committees, representation or even the cost of the committees. I said, therefore, that the information tabled should not be taken to be strictly accurate. I made that very clear. I also made it very clear that we were in the process of developing a truly accurate list of committees and we detailed those that we intended at this stage to abolish. We also indicated that well over 100 have already disappeared and that there would be many more to go.

There was an interjection, “That is not the point.” And the Premier answered —

I know the point the member is referring to. I will look at that list. I am not sure about exactly what the member is referring to, but I will look at it. I think there is probably some misunderstanding on the member’s part.

Often members will find that there have been multiple committees and structures relating to one function. That is the reason that many of them have been abolished. I will look at the ones the member detailed.

The Premier then goes on to talk about the accuracy of the information being the best available to the government; how there was something like 1 300 boards and committees; and how in Queensland, a state with twice the population of WA, there were less than half that number.

The Premier stated —

I will look at the examples given by the member for Rockingham and I will respond with exactly what is the status of those.

In my quick search of *Hansard*, I could not find any response to that or any further detail. However, that information has led Hon Ken Travers to extrapolate an enormous argument based on some ambiguous information. It ought to be made clear to the house that what Hon Ken Travers says about this is not necessarily the case.

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: If Hon Ken Travers wants to know the answers instead of vapouring on about challenges to the government and complaining about information not being tabled in this place, he might do better to formulate some precise questions to put to the responsible minister or minister representing the responsible minister.

Since he had to go down to the Assembly to find these documents, I am happy to table the copies that I have obtained.

Hon Ken Travers: When you table them, can you explain what they are?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: It is like an illness with Hon Ken Travers, is it not? He cannot stop!

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members!

Hon Donna Faragher: He doesn’t like your forensic analysis.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Hon Michael Mischin, do you wish to seek leave to table those documents?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I seek leave to table the documents referred to by the Premier in the other place—documents 2103, 2104, 2105 and 2106.

Point of Order

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Mr Deputy President, rather than just giving numbers, I would like the parliamentary secretary to identify exactly what those documents are seeking to tell us; that is, to tell us what they are before he tables them so that we have a clear and accurate record for the Parliament.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Yes; I have read out the titles of each document. I have identified them and I seek to table them. It is fine if Hon Ken Travers wishes to object to that; I do not care.

Hon Ken Travers: No; I do not object.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Hon Ken Travers was complaining about these documents. He referred to one in particular as the basis for his argument and I think that the house deserves to have available to it the whole bundle that the Premier was referring to. The house can draw its own conclusions from those documents, rather

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than have to rely on Hon Ken Travers' interpretation of what the Premier said rather than hear what the Premier actually said.

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members!

Debate Resumed

Leave granted. [See paper 2336.]

HON ED DERMER (North Metropolitan) [3.48 pm]: I am very pleased to rise in support of this important motion moved by my colleague Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich. I am also very pleased to have listened to Hon Michael Mischin's contribution to the debate because finally, by way of that contribution, this house is being informed in August about what it should have been informed in May—at the same time the Premier informed the Legislative Assembly.

I am disappointed with each of the government members in this house for not ensuring that this house was shown the appropriate respect and provided with this information. I must say that I am particularly disappointed in the Leader of the House. I have often admired Hon Norman Moore as a stout defender of the role and dignity of the Legislative Council.

Hon Norman Moore: Flattery will get you everywhere!

Hon ED DERMER: I would have hoped that Hon Norman Moore would have made sure that we were advised directly of the government's position with respect to these boards and that we would not have had to be advised indirectly when Hon Michael Mischin rose to his feet. I must say that Hon Michael Mischin rose in response to the challenge that was laid down by my colleague Hon Ken Travers. Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich and Hon Ken Travers are performing a very important service for the people of Western Australia by insisting that the members of this chamber, and, through this chamber, the people of Western Australia, are properly informed about what the government is up to from time to time. It is an extraordinary list of motions that Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich has put before this house for its consideration. Each of these motions is of particular value. What we have seen this afternoon demonstrates very clearly the effectiveness of the work of my two colleagues Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich and Hon Ken Travers. What should have come to this house from the government spontaneously in May has been extracted only at the insistence of Hon Ken Travers.

I am pleased that Hon Michael Mischin has finally seen the point and has quoted the Premier's words. It is interesting to consider what happens in political life when a person is tempted to make a broad sweeping statement that may sound good to the audience that is before that person at the time but does not understand the necessity to live up to those words and ensure that they are followed through. I understand from the manager of opposition business in the other place, Hon Mark McGowan, that it was during a business luncheon in March this year that the Premier made his announcement about how many boards and committees he was going to abolish. It is sometimes very easy to glance at the title of a board or committee and puzzle a bit as to what its purpose may be. That may not be because that board or committee is not serving an important purpose. It may be because the person who is looking at that list does not know the full detail and background of the important work that that board or committee is doing. I suspect that the Premier was tempted to impress his audience at that business luncheon by talking about how many boards and committees he was going to abolish, but he did not fully consider the implications of his statement. I imagine that if the government had then conducted a review of those boards and committees, it would have found that many of those boards and committees are serving a very important purpose. Therefore, a task that the Premier might have thought would be easy has proved to be far from easy. I suspect that might be one explanation for why the government has failed to inform this house—the senior chamber of this Parliament—about its intentions with respect to these boards and committees.

I congratulate Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich for putting this excellent motion on the agenda for us to debate today, and I congratulate Hon Ken Travers for following it through and applying the appropriate pressure to extract this information on behalf of the people of Western Australia. Finally, I thank Hon Michael Mischin for conceding the point that it is appropriate that this chamber receive the benefit of the same statement from the Premier that the Assembly received in May, and to read to this chamber that statement from the *Hansard* of the Assembly so that we would be officially informed about that statement. I also thank him for providing these tables. It is not always true, but in most cases it is true to say better late than never. In this case it is better late than never. I therefore thank Hon Michael Mischin for providing that information to us today. I thank Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich and Hon Ken Travers for applying pressure on the government to extract that information. It is a great example of how this opposition is being effective in drawing information from the government—albeit that this government is very reluctant to provide information, not only to the Legislative Council, but also to the people of Western Australia by way of the Legislative Council.

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It was interesting to listen to the comments of the Minister for Training and Workforce Development during this debate. The minister explained what he saw as the justification for splitting education and training and putting them into two separate departments. I am always very interested to hear about the success of education and training, and to hear about the hard work of the technical education providers in this state, and about the great success that is being achieved with students through the provision of that service. One of the proudest things for me was when I saw the significant increase in the number of apprenticeships and traineeships that was achieved during the time of the Gallop and Carpenter Labor governments relative to the Court Liberal government that preceded those governments.

However, I do not share the Minister for Training and Workforce Development's assumption that the key to that success was the splitting of education and training. I would give credit to the hardworking training providers and the students who respond positively to that training, rather than to someone who has put himself forward as a minister of the Crown and has said, "This is all very clever. I have achieved this by splitting education and training into two separate departments." I have an alternative theory about why the government has decided to split education and training and create a new Department of Training and Workforce Development, with the attendant cost of an additional chief executive officer. My alternative theory is that the Minister for Training and Workforce Development is a frustrated Minister for Education in waiting. We know from the election results in 2008 that the Liberal government at the time had a tenuous majority in the Legislative Assembly. Hon Liz Constable, the member for Churchlands, who had been alienated from the Liberal Party in earlier times, had successfully been able to hold onto that seat as an Independent. That seat had formerly been the seat of Floreat, and it had been one of the safest Liberal seats, certainly in the metropolitan area. Therefore, it was necessary for Mr Barnett, in seeking to draw together a majority in the Assembly—clearly a majority that the Liberal and National Parties did not have when their numbers were combined—and become Premier, to include in his ministry the member for Churchlands. I would have thought that it would have been a source of enormous frustration for Hon Peter Collier—a man who had worked hard, I believe often misguidedly, as the shadow Minister for Education—to find that opportunity denied to him. However, it is very sad that education and training have had to be split to form a new Department of Training and Workforce Development, with all the attendant cost increases, just because the Premier had to draw together a majority in the Assembly and now has to alleviate the frustrations of Hon Peter Collier.

It was interesting to see the teacher in Hon Peter Collier come out today. I understand, Mr Deputy President (Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm), that you have before you standing orders and instruments that you can use to maintain order in this place. I was waiting for Hon Peter Collier to ask Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich to stand in the corner! But that did not happen. I believe that there are parallels between the way Parliament works and the way schools work. It will be very interesting to write a paper on that one day. Hon Peter Collier is obviously a frustrated Minister for Education. The explanation that he gave us today to justify the splitting of that department was a good effort. But I would not give it a pass, because clearly he did not provide the real reason for that split. That reason was, I believe, to accommodate the aspirations of both Hon Peter Collier as a frustrated future Minister for Education, and the member for Churchlands as the current Minister for Education.

It is very important that any initiative that is taken to abolish a board or committee is undertaken only after a thorough analysis of the role and function of that board or committee. It is not enough to just glance at the title of a board or committee. That is a very inadequate way of understanding the purpose of that board or committee. We need to research why that particular board or committee was set up in the first place and what its specific function is. Only then can we make sure that any action to abolish that board or committee does not leave important work undone, and only then can all the consequences of abolishing that board or committee be taken into account. It is important that we respect the work that is performed by the members of boards and committees and not rush to action. It is unfortunate that the Premier might have thought at that business luncheon in March of this year that he would use a throwaway line to make his speech more attractive, and that he made that sweeping statement about how his government would look at abolishing boards and committees. Once he had made that statement, he then had to scramble to live up to that statement. It would have been better had the Premier considered the consequences of that statement before he made it.

We have seen a reluctance by this government to inform the Parliament, and the people of the state through the Parliament, about what its real intentions are. This is of great concern. Hon Michael Mischin has read into the record the Premier's statement, so I will not go back to that in detail. However, after listening to the words of Hon Michael Mischin, we can see that there is some ambiguity about the significance of the list that the Premier tabled at the time and that Hon Michael Mischin has tabled today. When I read the Premier's words in *Hansard* about the list of boards and instrumentalities that would require legislative change to be abolished, it certainly appeared to me—at least by implication—that they were structures that the government intended to abolish. Why else would the government provide a list advising the Assembly which boards and committees needed a

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legislative process to be abolished? It was interesting to be told today by Hon Michael Mischin that that may not have been the Premier's intention when he provided that list to the Assembly. It would be interesting to find out what the Premier's intention is. I know that Hon Norman Moore, the Leader of the House, represents the Premier in this house and I listened to his comments on this debate, but we are yet to hear what the Premier's real intention is. It would be nice to have that clarified by the Leader of the House.

Hon Ken Travers: It is interesting to note as well in the question Hon Michael Mischin read out that the Premier said he would come back, and he never has, which is interesting. They were Hon Michael Mischin's own words.

Hon ED DERMER: It is taking some time.

I am concerned and I fully expect that, but for the initiative of Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich to place this motion on the agenda and but for Hon Ken Travers's insistence today that the Premier provide the information we have not received, this house would continue to be uninformed. It would seem to me, to Hon Ken Travers, to Mr Deputy President (Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm) and to my other colleagues in the house that the Premier in March this year probably used a throwaway line to get a degree of approval—or what he might have anticipated to have been approval—from the audience that was before him. I imagine that many business people in Western Australia would fully understand and appreciate the important work of various boards and committees, but that the sweeping proposal of abolition was to try to appear dynamic, fiscally conservative and responsible.

When it comes down to the particulars, we got a very reluctant statement in May this year and a list that we thought related to bodies that required legislative change and were to be abolished, but today it has been suggested to us that perhaps it does not. The point Hon Ken Travers makes—that we are still waiting for the clarification the Premier said in the Assembly he would provide—shows to me that the Premier used a throwaway line to make himself sound like a Premier of action. When he saw what was actually involved, he probably found that it was a bit too hard and he has been reluctant to share his conclusion with the Assembly, and especially with the Council, as to the details of his real intentions. Again, I hope that the Leader of the House, as the Premier's representative, and others opposite will be forthcoming and share with us and with the people of Western Australia their real intentions.

All I can say again at this stage is that this is a motion of particular excellence and one that has done much to raise important matters and extract information from the government, albeit very reluctantly from the government's point of view. I am very pleased to commend the motion to the house.

HON WENDY DUNCAN (Mining and Pastoral — Parliamentary Secretary) [4.03 pm]: I rise also to take issue with this motion; in particular the first part of the motion in which Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich accuses the Premier of wasting taxpayers' money in creating new government agencies. In the course of developing a government and establishing the machinery of government, of course there are times when new departments need to be established. Hon Peter Collier has spoken at length about the establishment of the Department of Training and Workforce Development. This government's focus on regional development and its delivery of royalties for regions has made a huge difference to regional Western Australia. It was the government's decision to establish the Department of Regional Development and Lands, and that occurred on 1 July 2009. That has proven to be a very good decision of this government in enabling us to effectively and efficiently deliver projects the subject of the new focus of this government on regional development. The Department of Regional Development and Lands brings together the state lands services and pastoral lands services from the former Department for Planning and Infrastructure; and also regional development and major regional projects that were previously housed with the former Department of Local Government and Regional Development. Those lands services in particular were buried in the bowels of the previously monolithic Department for Planning and Infrastructure. While they were there, neglected in the corner, the state slipped into a chronic land shortage from which it is still trying to recover and still trying to take the necessary action to improve land supply. One job for the new lands section in the Department of Regional Development and Lands is to identify the many hundreds of blocks of lazy land in existence, both in regional and metropolitan Western Australia, where land held by various government agencies is not being fully utilised at a time when the cost and demand for land is at unprecedented levels. Therefore, from 1 July the department created new divisions within the state: the community resource network, the Pilbara Cities and the Ord–East Kimberley expansion project. These are all divisions that require expertise and focus and are very important for delivering our goal of developing regional Western Australia.

As all members are aware, the Royalties for Regions Act 2009, now on the statute book, provides that 25 per cent of the royalties collected in Western Australia be put aside for regional development. There are major projects now underway in regional Western Australia that require very close management and good governance. Almost \$1 billion will be spent on the Pilbara revitalisation plan over the four years of this term of government. I have mentioned previously the Ord–East Kimberley project and housing for essential workers. One of the

Hon Norman Moore; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Max Trenorden; Deputy President; Hon Michael Mischin; Hon Ed Dermer; Hon Wendy Duncan

achievements of our government offices under the new focus on regional development was the development of the Country Age Pension Fuel Card. It is something which has not been done before in Australia and which took a great deal of work and research. That program has been delivered very effectively into regional Western Australia and more recently has been extended to cover disability services pensioners and carers. That work needs to be managed by the department along with the Department of Transport, which is actually delivering it.

A lot of the projects in the current budget have been brought to us from other government agencies or from organisations outside government. They come to the Department of Regional Development and Lands where our very skilled officers assess the business plans that are submitted to them. On other occasions they prepare business plans that then go through the cabinet process. That has all been very effectively managed to deliver the new focus on regional Western Australia.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to temporary orders.