

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from 8 August.

HON TOM STEPHENS (Mining and Pastoral - Leader of the Opposition) [5.40 pm]: The address that was delivered to the Parliament by the Administrator provides a formal moment for the House to express its appreciation to the Administrator, firstly, for his calling on the House and delivering the Government's address and, secondly, for the role that he has taken on as Administrator in the interregnum between the retirement of the former Governor and the arrival of the Governor-elect. The Opposition wants to participate in the formal process regularly afforded to the House at this time of expressing its appreciation to the Administrator for taking such care in his role and performing that task well and proudly on behalf of the people of Western Australia; in particular on this occasion, for delivering the Government's program to the Parliament.

I mention in passing that I have been in this place for a little time. That is not something one boasts of in the Labor Party as it gets one into trouble.

Hon Greg Smith: You are the only mining and pastoral member of the Australian Labor Party.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Therefore I had better not test my luck! I can correctly record on my letterhead "The Labor Member for Mining and Pastoral".

Hon Greg Smith: The only member.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I will keep that in mind as well. However, in my time in this place I have never previously seen an Administrator call on the House to deliver the Government's address. I express my pleasure in having yet another novel experience.

Another feature of that event was novel. For the first time no representative from the Supreme Court was present in the House. I have no idea of the explanation for that but in all the openings at which I have been present, including the less formal ones -

Hon Barry House: Isn't Hon Mr Justice Kennedy performing dual roles?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Yes, but presumably he was not in this place in that role. It may be that he doubled up those roles. However, it was an interesting experience to sit in this place without the Supreme Court's being formally represented.

Hon Kim Chance: That is workplace agreements for you!

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Workplace agreements or whatever, I found that to be a new experience.

Having made those formal and casual observations, I now want to comment, in this speech to the Address-in-Reply on behalf of the Labor Opposition, on my sense of apprehension and disbelief at the Government's agenda as it was outlined to the House yesterday. The people of Western Australia have had a great deal said to them on behalf of this Government, either in similar addresses delivered to this Parliament or by the Premier or his ministers while in government or opposition, as to what they would do when delivering an agenda. Many of those addresses are still remembered through the length and breadth of this State. This Government has promised so much and delivered so little. The promises that were made in the lead-up to the 1993 state election were memorable because we saw the promises so quickly dishonoured and not delivered. For instance, the pre-election commitment to open and accountable government was not honoured. There was no commitment to the principle that there would be better government and more jobs. Throughout the seven and a half years of this Government's period in office, excuses have been delivered frequently for why things have not been done rather than a trumpeting of the delivery of pre-election commitments.

Again, I recall the pre-election commitments made in the lead-up to the 1996 state election that were not honoured. Instead of the Government's delivering its commitments to the people of Western Australia, no sooner was it re-elected than we found that those promises counted for nought. Instead of seeing the people of Western Australia protected by those pre-election commitments, the Government ran hurriedly from them. I am thinking in particular of the Government's response to the question of the gold royalty, which played a significant part in the election campaign in much of my electorate. Firm commitments were made in the lead-up to that state election that were simply dishonoured. Commitments were also made in reference to AlintaGas. Instead of those commitments being delivered, we have seen subsequently the sale of AlintaGas.

To have to sit in this Chamber and listen to the Government's alleged program, enunciated on its behalf by the Administrator, was an opportunity to sit with suspended faith and a complete sense of disbelief. I believe I share with the rest of the community of Western Australia the intuitive understanding of what this Government is on about with its so-called agenda that was outlined to the House. I and the community of Western Australia

recognised that we were listening to hollow promises and that the much-trumpeted social dividend frequently promised in the lead-up to the 1996 state election is yet to be delivered. Instead, the WA community has copped a Government which is haughty and arrogant and which remains unconnected to the issues that drive the people of Western Australia. It has no appreciation of their hopes for a Government that will deliver an agenda which looks after health, education, community safety and which includes a commitment to public transport and the environment. Instead, they have a Government which is preoccupied with its ideology and which, in driving that ideology, has done damage to the social fabric of Western Australia, to the public health system and to the education system. It has virtually destroyed aspects of the public transport system, shown no regard for the needs of the environment and shown little regard for the people of Western Australia. On the basis of what presumably will be the last such address before the next state election, this Government wants to say to the people of Western Australia, "Elect us, we will do a good job because this is what we will do."

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: What is your side going to say? So far we have had a lot of rhetoric. How about going into specifics.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Well might Hon Derrick Tomlinson ask. I do not want to miss the opportunity of saying why this Address-in-Reply should not proceed without first highlighting the record of the current Government in its seven and a half years in office. Let us talk about the keeping of promises and then deal with what should be done by a State Government here in Western Australia and, finally, what will be done after the next state election should the people entrust government to the Gallop-led Labor Party.

I am sure that members opposite will have heard well and truly the complaints of the people of Western Australia about their performance in office. I will canvass many of those complaints. If members opposite listen attentively and creatively to the complaints of the people of Western Australia, they will hang their heads in shame, toss in the towel and say, "They're right; we've done a bad job. It's time to hand over the benches to a party that will clearly do a better job."

Hon Kim Chance: They should give up with some dignity.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I do not expect them to do that. . I believe the challenge will be left to the people of Western Australia to finally bring this Government to book. In response to their broken and hollow promises, failed agenda and blind pursuit of ideology, privatisation and corporatisation in outsourcing the assets and public jewels of the people of Western Australia, which has destroyed the fabric of this society, the only reply the people of Western Australia will give at the ballot box will be to say, "Be gone; we have had enough of you. We want a Government that will have as its central focus health, education, community safety, public transport and the environment to ensure that the environment is given due regard and that we have a Government that is responsive to our needs."

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I do not mind the occasional interjection but not nine at once. Members should at least be selective, so their injections meet the mark.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: It is clear that the people of Western Australia can neither trust anything this Government says nor believe any of its promises. Prior to the last election this Government made a commitment not to sell AlintaGas. What did the Government do? It sold AlintaGas. It made a commitment not to introduce a gold royalty. What did it do? It introduced a gold royalty. It made a commitment to provide a debt-free future for children and a social dividend.

Hon Kim Chance: Net debt is higher.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: We should remember the promises and the television advertisements. Rather, we have a Government that has delivered a net debt that is higher than that which it had when it was elected to office.

Hon Kim Chance: With a 70 per cent increase in revenue the net debt is higher.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: As Hon Kim Chance pointed out by interjection, taxation revenue has increased by 70 per cent; and net debt has increased, despite the ideology that has been driving this Government.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson interjected.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I know Hon Derrick Tomlinson has much to do by way of tutoring the members of this House; but I did not hear his interjection. Perhaps he could repeat it.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: Thank you, I will enjoy the opportunity. Why don't you allow Hon Kim Chance to make your speech, because he will do it better.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I have always said that on this side of the House we are surrounded by talent.

Hon Barry House: There is only one member there.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: They are elsewhere on parliamentary business.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Absolutely. I am sure that endless numbers of Labor members could present the case better than I.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: Even Hon Kim Chance is laughing.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: One of the great benefits of members opposite being in this House over the next few weeks will be hearing from all opposition members on the Address-in-Reply, no doubt on more than one occasion.

Hon Peter Foss: Will they all need prompting like you do?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I do not know. I am sure they will not need prompting, but we are a collegial lot.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I have been trying to accommodate interjections, but let us not be silly.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I was saying that the Government has failed to deliver on its promises. Despite having record revenues, including a 70 per cent increase in taxation, we have ended up with -

Hon Bob Thomas: And asset sales.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Hon Bob Thomas has further displayed the quality of interjections from this side of the House by referring to asset sales. Despite all those asset sales, an increase in taxation revenue and the enormous amount of revenue that has come from the privatisation process, the Government has tackled neither debt nor its pre-election commitment to deliver on the social dividend. It has not improved the public school or health systems of Western Australia. Rather, this Government has squandered the resources of the taxpayers of Western Australia on consultants and advertising and the ephemera that goes with it and outsourcing and privatisation resulting in economic vandalism. Members opposite can no longer hold up their heads with any level of dignity over economic management in Western Australia.

The people of Western Australia have every right to ask this question of members opposite and their Government: Where has all that money gone that it has been acquiring through increased revenue, increased taxation and selling off the assets of the people of Western Australia, whether they be little properties associated with schools or larger properties associated with organisations such as AlintaGas? The Government has destroyed the social fabric of Western Australia.

What is the good of privatisation and contracting out if the State loses? Well might the people of Western Australia continue to ask how they have benefited from the processes so far. The answer is, they have not benefited from this Government's agenda. The people of Western Australia have not seen the advance of a social dividend; rather, they are worse off for it. They have seen the Police Service fail to receive the numbers it needs to deliver on the commitment of community safety.

Hon Greg Smith interjected.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: What is the good of a police station if it is closed? Does the member not realise that even in his own electorate there are signs on the police station indicating that during normal operating hours the station will be closed due to restricted man hours?

Hon Greg Smith interjected.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: He does not even know that the police station in his own electorate is shut.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.30 pm

Hon TOM STEPHENS: As I told an intensely attentive Chamber before the dinner suspension, the Government is presiding over a situation in which much of the Western Australia community is justifiably afraid. People know that their safety is no longer guaranteed by the Police Service because it cannot provide sufficient officers in their community to respond to community safety needs. No longer are sufficient police on the streets to protect the elderly from the criminal elements who involve themselves in bag snatching, to frighten off car thieves or to respond to calls and complaints from residents who experience home invasions or burglaries. In fact, some communities in my electorate face a situation in which the police stations -

Hon Greg Smith: They are new police stations.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Hon Greg Smith chimes in right on cue! What is the point of a new police station without police in it? What is the point of establishing police stations if local residents find a sign on the door that states, "In view of staff shortages, the police station is closed"?

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: That is cost-effective policing!

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Cost-effective policing, is it?

Hon B.K. Donaldson: How do you respond to the fact that WA has more police per capita than does any other State in Australia?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: My response is that when attending a police station, the community of Western Australia find it unacceptable to find it closed with a sign on the door: "Due to staff shortages, this police station is closed."

Hon Simon O'Brien: Name one police station where that has happened.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: People last week in Derby, which is a major regional centre of this State in my electorate, and that of Hon Greg Smith and Hon Norman Moore, found such a sign on their police station. This was through no fault of the police officers involved. The police did not have a full complement of officers at that station to keep it open for normal business hours. They are already overstretched in responding to any incident. Therefore, they legitimately complain about the situation and say to people in their community that they would love the station to remain open, but regrettably, no matter how they try to attend to it, the community faces a closed police station whenever numbers are not available to staff it full time during the day.

Hon B.K. Donaldson: How many officers are stationed in Derby?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I have made inquiries into this matter. I know enough about the Derby situation as an opposition member and local member of Parliament to tell Hon Bruce Donaldson that it is time that the member's Government started to make inquiries about the state of policing across Western Australia.

I refer to another and smaller community, which was referred to by Hon Greg Smith almost disparagingly because people might complain. They complain as they have only one police officer. That community and everyone else - apart from this Government - find it unacceptable that it should remain a single-person police station, with all the consequences that flow from exposing police in that way. That station is not alone. A number of other police stations similarly, and unacceptably, have a single officer allocated to them.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: You raise a serious issue and a serious question. What is the population of that locality?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The township of Yalgoo is quite small. However, the district the police officer services is geographically quite huge.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: I appreciate that. Does the officer stationed at Yalgoo service the whole of the district solo?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Yes. That is the entire area outside Mt Magnet and the district of Cue on the eastern and north-eastern boundary. The northern boundary is the police district of Gascoyne Junction. This comes eventually to the north west of Carnarvon, and then further to the west to Geraldton.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: I assume that this officer would frequently be on patrol in that large geographic area.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Precisely.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: Is he on patrol solo?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: He is solo across open station country, gold mines, mining operations, Aboriginal communities and his town of Yalgoo. The people of Yalgoo and the Police Union (WA) rightly complain and say to the Government that the provision of additional police resources is appropriate. Regrettably, the previous officer in charge in Yalgoo, when responding by himself to an incident at the local hotel, was beaten and assaulted.

Hon Greg Smith: There are two police, but only one on duty at a time.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The safety of that police officer has a good chance of being enhanced if the criminal who dares to assault a police officer fears that someone is available to respond to the ugly situation that person creates. The community and the shire are of that view, and I share their view. As the local member of Parliament, and particularly because he is a government member, Hon Greg Smith should also share their view and get the Government to do the bidding of that community and respond with resources for it. Members opposite seem to think that because that is the situation in the regional areas of Western Australia - I have been speaking about my electorate - that is good enough. Regrettably, the shortage of police numbers of which I speak is the order of the day throughout the length and breadth of this State. Hon Bruce Donaldson interjected previously that -

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: Or was it me?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: It was either Tweedledum or Tweedledee; I am not sure. The interjection was along the lines that Western Australia has more police than those found in any other State.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: No, it was Hon Bruce Donaldson.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Tweedledum. I do not know whether Hon Bruce Donaldson is trying to pick an argument with his Premier, because even the Premier has belatedly, reluctantly and finally recognised that this State is short of police.

Hon B.K. Donaldson: It is attrition - picking up the slack. However, you have not answered my question: How many officers are stationed in Derby?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: My answer to that question is this -

Hon B.K. Donaldson: Do I need to put it on notice?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: This is my answer to Hon Bruce Donaldson's question -

Hon W.N. Stretch: Not enough.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: That is one answer. However, there is another answer; that is, I agreed with the Premier of Western Australia when he finally admitted that there is a need for increased police numbers. Why do I agree with him? Because he agrees with the Opposition. With whom do we both agree? The people of Western Australia.

Hon Greg Smith: Who disagrees with you?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Obviously, Hon Bruce Donaldson, and for the past seven and a half years the Government of Western Australia, has disagreed with the current view of the Premier, because during that time the Government has argued, in exactly the same way that Hon Bruce Donaldson has argued; that is, that somehow or other we have sufficient police numbers. I fear that the interjection of Hon Bruce Donaldson indicates that, similar to all the other pre-election commitments made by the coalition, the Government does not believe that those police officers are needed, and the Treasury benches will not deliver those police numbers to which the Premier has now committed. I suspect that he, like Hon Bruce Donaldson, holds the view that there are enough police officers in this State, and despite the fact that he has recently discovered some money in a hollow log so that he now thinks there are sufficient funds -

Hon B.K. Donaldson: This is the social dividend. You are getting it back.

Hon Ken Travers: Is this it? We are finally seeing it.

Hon B.K. Donaldson: It has been there for years.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Two and a half months after the Treasurer delivered his budget, when there were not sufficient funds to employ extra police -

Hon Ken Travers: Nor did we need them.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Yes. Suddenly, the prognostications of the Treasurer are that extra funds will mysteriously appear as a result of changes in the Government's circumstances during the past two and a half months. Suddenly, the Premier agrees with the Labor Opposition, and in turn the community of Western Australia, that those extra police are needed, and he has said, if the people of Western Australia believe him, that if he is lucky enough to be returned to the Treasury benches, he will deliver on his promise. Nobody believes him.

Hon W.N. Stretch: As we delivered on our promises before.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: On which one - gold royalty, AlintaGas, social dividend, better government and more accountable government?

Hon N.F. Moore: All of those things. You have a very short memory.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Rubbish. Government members have a selective view of themselves. They do not share the view that the people of Western Australia have of them; that is, they have had enough of them. They know that the Government has not fulfilled the pre-election commitments it made. It has not delivered on the social dividend and it has not delivered better management. No matter how many times it says it has, it has not. The people of Western Australia know that the Government has been about self-aggrandisement and arrogance, with a complete disregard for the people of Western Australia.

Hon W.N. Stretch: How many new police stations did you build? Come on!

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The point is that the Government does not staff the police stations that it has; it leaves them closed. I have given two examples of that if Yalgoo is included.

Hon Greg Smith: Keep going. See if you can find some more.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I saw another example today in a media release from one of my colleagues which landed on my desk.

Hon W.N. Stretch: It is called faxes in fairyland.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Is it? It is from the Mayor of Vincent, John Hyde. He said -

20 LESS POLICE ON PERTH DISTRICT STREETS

The loss of up to 20 traffic police in the Perth district has been attacked by Vincent Mayor John Hyde and Perth MLA Diana Warnock.

Hon W.N. Stretch: Is that authorised by John Halden?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: This media release landed on my desk today. It continues -

"On some of the city's busiest roads we no longer have nightshift traffic cars staffed and operating," said Mr Hyde.

Hon W.N. Stretch interjected.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: We will deal with prostitution in a while. Hon Bill Stretch raises the issue of street prostitution.

Hon W.N. Stretch interjected.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: He raised the issue of barricades in the street.

Hon W.N. Stretch interjected.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: That is the reason the barricades were placed in the streets.

Hon W.N. Stretch: You would know; I do not know.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I read the newspapers.

Hon N.F. Moore: You don't read the papers to find out what is going on, do you?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I do indeed, particularly when it comes to North Perth. The media release continues -

"Last year we were promised there would be no cut in service when we lost two traffic police to Perth district which was supposed to cover Vincent - now we're losing 20 of the police meant to look after us."

Ms Warnock said that existing police at suburban stations in the Perth district were already under pressure having to monitor school traffic zones and a growing inner-city residential area.

One could not find two more in-touch and reliable witnesses about the needs of the people of Perth than John Hyde and the member for Perth. Both of them have distinguished careers as representatives of the people of Western Australia. One is in local government and the other is in the State Parliament. The one in local government will, I am confident, join us in this Parliament representing the people of Perth, who are desperate to have a Labor administration that will meet some of their needs. The press release continues -

"The Premier was only a few weeks ago saying there are sufficient police yet now we discover we've lost 20 from our area while the population and road use is increasing," said Ms Warnock.

Hon Ken Travers: Do you have the figures on the Nedlands Police Station?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I can come to that, because I know some interesting things about the Nedlands Police Station and what has been going on there. It continues -

Mr Hyde said that the cut in 20 police would affect service and response times in Vincent, Subiaco, Cambridge and the City of Perth.

"Local government shouldn't be expected to take on the important traffic policing role of a trained police force," said Mr Hyde.

"At busy intersections we have drivers ignoring bans on right turns and causing accidents and residential streets turned into speedways.

"Our inner city streets are providing huge amounts of revenue for unmanned intersection cameras and Multinovas - but these don't deter dangerous driving, only a visible, active police presence does," said Mr Hyde.

Ms Warnock said the Government had been in power for seven years and could increase police numbers tomorrow - nobody believed they would increase numbers after the election . . .

Hon B.K. Donaldson: Do you believe in the separation of powers between the Minister for Police and the Police Service like Western Australia has? Would you say that the deployment of personnel is the role of the Police Service? You should talk to Assistant Commissioner Bob Kucera and ask him what he did about ensuring the deployment of the second officer at Yalgoo. I approached the police. Deployment is not the role of the minister or the Government. The day that happens is the day we will have a police state. I would hate to see that happen. You would like to see it happen. I am sorry, Mr President, I should not be interjecting at this rate.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: In response to the speech delivered by the member, albeit by way of interjection, the essential issue is the allocation of resources. The Government allocates resources to the police and they are required to do their job. However, the member should not start to knock the Police Force, as he is effectively doing, by saying that somehow or other the police are cheating the people of Western Australia when it is the Government that is cheating the people by denying the police the resources to do their job. The Government cannot play the pea and thimble trick in this place by failing to put a pea under the thimble so that the police cannot deliver the resources and then say it is the police's fault.

Hon Ken Travers: The Government is always blaming someone else.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: That is right. If it is not knocking the Opposition, it is knocking the police, as the member has just done.

Hon B.K. Donaldson: Don't put words in my mouth.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: These words came out of the member's own mouth. He effectively laid the blame at the door of the police by saying they have been unable to allocate police resources around this State.

Hon B.K. Donaldson: They have the resources. They have a fax machine. You didn't even give them a fax machine.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: He is now attacking the Premier.

Hon Ken Travers: Yes, the Premier has it wrong.

Hon B.K. Donaldson: The deployment of personnel is the responsibility of the police, not the Government.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: No, the member just said they have the resources.

Hon B.K. Donaldson: Yes, they have the resources.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The Premier is wrong, is he?

Hon B.K. Donaldson: No. We have been smart economic managers.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Can *Hansard* record laughter? Hon Bruce Donaldson is at odds with his Premier. Either the Premier or Hon Bruce Donaldson is not telling the truth. The police either have or do not have the resources. The view of the community of Western Australia is that the police do not have the resources; the view of the police is that they do not have the resources; and the view of the Police Union (WA) is that they do not have the resources.

Hon Bob Thomas: And the public.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: It is the view of the public of Western Australia that they do not have the resources.

Hon B.K. Donaldson: The Leader of the Opposition should come out to my electorate and I will show him the waste of police personnel in country towns where there has not been a crime for 50 years.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Is the member arguing for the closure of those police stations?

Hon B.K. Donaldson: No, but a reduction from two officers to one.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The member wants to see the police stations in his electorate reduced from two to one?

Hon B.K. Donaldson: I have spoken to people in the central wheatbelt who support me.

Hon Ken Travers: Where are they?

Hon B.K. Donaldson: In my home town of Koorda.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Hon Bruce Donaldson has already made his speech.

Hon B.K. Donaldson: I am sorry about that.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: It was becoming a very interesting series of interjections. Hon Bruce Donaldson, a government member, suggested that in his own electorate we can find the police we need for the people of Western Australia by reducing the police numbers.

Hon B.K. Donaldson: There are already one-man stations there now.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: So the member wants more of them?

Hon B.K. Donaldson: There are two police officers in my hometown of Koorda who, based on the true statistics, are unnecessary. I asked for those police to be transferred.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: How many more are there of those police?

Hon B.K. Donaldson: The Leader of the Opposition should visit my electorate and I will show him.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Take a guess. How many more are there?

Hon B.K. Donaldson: A number of police stations out there could reduce the number of their personnel because the workload simply is not there.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Is it one or two?

Hon B.K. Donaldson: The Leader of the Opposition does not know the electorate but I will take him there.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: That is why I ask the question. Is the number 10 or 20?

Hon B.K. Donaldson: The Leader of the Opposition cannot say how many officers there are in Derby.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Is the number 10 or 20? Apparently, there is an alternative view inside the coalition as to how to provide community safety in Western Australia. According to Hon Bruce Donaldson, it is to strip the police of the resources they do not need in the agricultural areas of Western Australia.

Hon Ken Travers: What has he done about this? Has he said to anyone, "We have too many police; take them away"?

Hon B.K. Donaldson: I have stated that in my home town of Koorda and the population and the Shire of Koorda are fully aware of what I have done as I have kept them fully informed. I approached the Police Service over the matter and wanted the officer to go to Yalgoo.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: At least the Opposition agrees there should be two police officers at Yalgoo, which is more than the local member does. Hon Greg Smith does not appear to have that view.

Hon Bob Thomas interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The time has come for the Leader of the Opposition to address me.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I find this absolutely fascinating because last week the people of Western Australia were being asked by the Premier to believe him when he said that he had finally come to their view that there is a need for extra police.

Hon B.K. Donaldson: I am not disputing that.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The member did.

Hon B.K. Donaldson: I did not.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: He is backing down now. That did not last long.

Hon Ray Halligan: You have a look at *Hansard* tomorrow.

Hon B.K. Donaldson: If we could employ an extra 100 police officers, that would be fine.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Just 100?

Hon B.K. Donaldson: One hundred or 150. That would pick up all the policemen in the Labor Party who are trying to enter Parliament. We could replace all your candidates.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I find this fascinating.

Hon B.K. Donaldson: That is if they get in, of course.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: It is like having an auction with this Government. The member starts by saying there are too many police, they do not need any more resources and we can take some away from the agricultural region. Suddenly the member happens to spot something that changes his tune and a member tells me that if I check *Hansard* tomorrow I will come to the same conclusion.

Hon B.K. Donaldson: You are short of substance if you have to keep arguing against me.

Hon Ray Halligan: That is right, you have no substance of your own.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I am only dealing with the substance that the government members are throwing to the House by way of interjection.

Hon Ray Halligan: No, you are twisting it around as you have no substance of your own. Your substance is all rhetoric. We have been down this path before.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I will deal with the substance. The substance is that the community of Western Australia is of the view that its safety has been placed at risk by the policies adopted by this Government. Those policies are to strip the police of the resources that would otherwise have left them with sufficient resources to staff the Police Service to the level needed to re-establish an opportunity for community safety across Western Australia.

Hon W.N. Stretch: That is your view and the Police Union's view. I do not believe it is the view of the public in general.

Hon Bob Thomas: I know it is the general public's view.

Hon W.N. Stretch: I am sure you do.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I have been challenged to deal with the substance of the substantive issue. It is not only the view of the people of Western Australia and the Police Union. That view has now been adopted by the Premier; that is, there is now a need for extra police. The Premier has finally come to that view, at complete odds with the propositions he has been putting for almost the past three and a half years. Suddenly and mysteriously, as the election looms on the horizon, there is a need for extra police.

Hon W.N. Stretch: There is always a need for extra police. You know that. That need has been there as long as you and I have been in Parliament. You can put a police officer on every street corner and it will not solve crimes. You and I both know that, so stop talking nonsense.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Let us put this all together: The interjection from Hon Bruce Donaldson, the interjection from Hon Bill Stretch, the track record of the Government, the promises in the past in the lead-up to elections, and now the commitment made by the Premier last week re-articulated in the address delivered by the Administrator that there will be additional police. I do not believe that the Government is dinkum.

Hon W.N. Stretch: We don't believe you; we never did when you were in Government. That is the thing about Oppositions.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: We now have before the House this clearly articulated dissent within government ranks about whether there is a need or a role for extra police.

All I say to the people of Western Australia is that they have good reason not to believe the Government, based on past form, and this evening's debate has shown that already cracks are developing in the Government's commitment to more police resources. Senior government members do not appear to see the need for extra police resources or officers. Hon Bill Stretch holds the senior position of Secretary to the Parliamentary Liberal Party, and he articulates that crime will not be solved and that it would not matter if police were on every corner.

Hon W.N. Stretch: I said that it would not stop crime.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Does Hon Bill Stretch support the provision of extra police?

Hon W.N. Stretch: Yes, if they can be afforded.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Can the Government afford them?

Hon W.N. Stretch: I said that more police is not the sole answer to solving crime. You and I both know that. Much legislation could be passed that would do more to solve crime than extra police officers would.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Can the Government afford extra police?

Hon N.F. Moore: Let us deal with the issue of consistency.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: That is the theme I am developing.

Hon N.F. Moore: Let us talk about workplace agreements.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Given the way the Government has organised the Notice Paper and the motions it has given notice of, we will have plenty of time to talk about workplace agreements. I am now talking during what is called government time.

Hon N.F. Moore: It is the House's time; there is no such thing as government time.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: No, the Government takes the lot. The Government thinks it is the House.

Hon N.F. Moore: The problem is that you never stop talking. You spoke on the industrial relations issue for eight hours.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I might take eight hours again.

Hon N.F. Moore: You could take as long as you like if you helped pass legislation.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I thank the Leader of the House. I will take as long as I like. I will be happy to cooperate with the passage of government legislation when the Leader of the House indicates when some advance will be made on the agendas of non-government members of this House. Non-government members would like to see the advancement of issues important to them; for example, the re-establishment of the select committee into finance broking.

Hon N.F. Moore: Do you mean the politically motivated, Labor Party-stacked committee?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Sorry?

Hon N.F. Moore: That committee comprised two members from the Labor Party and one from the rest of the House. Further, the Opposition has one fewer member than when it first set up the committee.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Will the Leader of the House not allow that committee to be re-established?

Hon N.F. Moore: How many members do you have now? Is it 10 or 11? That is not even a third of the House, yet two committee members out of three were from the Labor Party.

Hon B.K. Donaldson: We will test you on the community safety issues when legislation is introduced. Will you pass that legislation when we bring it in?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: We will pass everything.

Hon W.N. Stretch: You will pass the lot?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Yes.

Hon W.N. Stretch: You guys are a joke.

Hon Ken Travers: We would have passed it three years ago. What took you so long?

Hon W.N. Stretch: You stalled on it.

Hon Ken Travers: We introduced the first Prostitution Bill.

Hon N.F. Moore: Will you legalise prostitution?

Hon Ken Travers: Will you stamp out prostitution in Kalgoorlie? Do you support the police stamping it out?

Hon N.F. Moore: Will you bring in legislation to license prostitution?

Hon Ken Travers: What will you do about it?

Hon N.F. Moore: I am asking you.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The Leader of the House is a member of the Government.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Leader of the Opposition has the floor. I have been fairly charitable by allowing interjections. However, members are allowing the debate to develop into a joke.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The Government has no credibility on the issue of police numbers. This last-ditch attempt by the Government to make it look as though it is serious about the issue cannot and should not be believed. It is simply another chapter in the pattern of deception in which this Government has engaged. This light-hearted exchange is further substantiation of the Opposition's view that senior government members do not have their hearts in the Government's commitment to additional police resources and numbers to respond to the demands, expectations and fears of the community of Western Australia. The Premier's backflip last weekend has no credibility. He told the Police Union (WA) annual conference on 20 June that there was no need for any new police officers in Western Australia. He changed that tune over the weekend; however, senior members of the Government in this place are stuck on the wrong tune and still arguing the case that was in accord with the

Premier's views in June. He has changed his view, but members opposite do not seem to have caught up with that change of policy. It is further evidence that there will be no follow-through on this last-ditch pitch to win the hearts and minds of the voters of Western Australia, who are indicating through the polls what they think of this Government.

A few days before the Premier's announcement, the Labor Party declared its position on these issues. The Leader of the Opposition made a detailed headland speech to the people of Western Australia. It was a positive declaration of what would be the hallmark of a Labor Administration in this State. It is important that this commitment be put on the record in this House to respond to the concerns expressed by the people of Western Australia about the absence of police. I quote –

Police numbers are an issue.

Labor wants more police on the beat.

The Union wants more police on the beat.

And most definitely the Western Australian people want more police on the beat.

We know that more police will make a difference.

As a first step, we will want a guarantee that authorised strengths are actually being met. In other words, communities should be able to rely on the fact that their local station has their full complement of officers.

The Leader of the Opposition went on to announce –

. . . a Labor Government will boost police numbers by a minimum of 250 officers.

Over four years, this will cost \$56 million.

We will be primarily funding this boost in police numbers by a 12 percent cut in government advertising.

Those of us in this Chamber who have watched ministers begrudgingly detail and document the full cost of the Government's advertising program over the past seven and a half years will appreciate the size of the advertising budget it has had at its disposal since it has been in office.

In so many cases, funds that could have been better deployed to respond to the safety fears and needs of the people of Western Australia have been wantonly wasted. As Dr Gallop said, the Labor Party's priority is making our streets and towns safer. It is not about spending taxpayers' money on glossy brochures and political propaganda, but about directing it to areas of need. An extra 250 officers will make a real difference in metropolitan and country areas. For me and the communities I represent, nothing could be closer to the truth. The communities in the regional parts of Western Australia are seeking these additional resources. I have mentioned a couple of communities, but I could mention others as well. Rural life is becoming more complicated, and the staffing decisions that are made by the Police Department in response to its current shortages too regularly leave the regional areas of Western Australia with staffing levels more in keeping with the way things once were in the bush and in the regions.

I have found it educative to regularly go into my electorate's communities. Time and again it is brought home to me how these communities are growing in their complexity. They are growing in the dynamic that drives them. There are many challenges, opportunities and problems. Typically, I have a view of my old home town of Broome and the communities that surround it as being small communities, because I remember them as they once were. Increasingly, I appreciate that those communities have grown in complexity, challenges and needs. These days their needs include a police presence or visit, but the police do not yet have the resources to respond to those community needs. For example, the communities in the vast Dampier peninsula north of Broome, which have large populations, are still seeking a permanent police presence. The police, presumably on behalf of the Government, told those communities that they would not get a police presence unless they provide a house, communication facilities, an office and support for the police officer. Those communities have gone out of their way to build a house. Beagle Bay, for instance, has been there for 110 years. It is larger than Yalgoo and many of the towns that have police resources, but still police are not allocated to that town. The house that was built by the community from its own resources remains empty, and the police office is unstaffed. Kalumburu is another example. It is begging for a police presence on a regular basis. It is staffed by police visits from the Wyndham Police Station, which is nearly 1 000 kilometres away. The visits by road from the officers at the Wyndham Police Station are costly, and they have a limited capacity to respond to the safety needs of the Kalumburu community. The police would love to provide a more regular presence within that community; yet the Police Service is unable to do so because it does not have those resources. In that case, the communities again allocated a house for the Police Service and still there is no police presence.

Endless numbers of Western Australian citizens living in communities like that are crying out for a regular or permanent police presence within those communities. Still they do not get that opportunity under this Government, because the resources remain scarce. The Government demands that there be an allocation of freedom to allow the Police Service to make those decisions itself. That is all very well, but it can happen only if it has those resources. Until it has those resources, many parts of Western Australia will have a Clayton's police service. The address by Dr Geoff Gallop, the Leader of the Opposition, says that we will make it clear to police management that these officers are to go where and when crime is the worst. As a start, 50 of these extra officers will be deployed as transit police for the metropolitan train system as part of our plan to make our trains safer. Other officers will be used strategically to target known hot spots for crime and antisocial behaviour. They will be deployed throughout the State on a needs basis. In response to the address given by the Leader of the Opposition on Thursday, 27 July, the Premier did his about-face over the following weekend. The Opposition says that the Premier has every obligation to come clean on how he intends to fund the \$40m required to appoint the 200 additional police officers. He relies on the claim that higher oil royalties, which he has yet to detail, will provide the extra revenue. However, he has not explained in the state budget the basis upon which these claims have been made. This begs the question: Is the Premier simply involved in creating a false claim to the people of Western Australia, like so many of his previous election promises, or, when the Premier and Treasurer delivered his budget, was he involved in deliberately underestimating revenue growth in this State?

The Premier has additional credibility problems compounded by his record on police numbers in the past. As we all know, in 1993 the Government promised 800 new police officers over eight years, before redefining that promise to mean only 500 new police officers and 300 redirected from desk duties. Even today we know that the stations in Kalgoorlie, Geraldton, Derby and various other parts of regional Western Australia are understaffed. The police stations in Kalgoorlie and Geraldton have about 10 fewer officers than their approved muster. We know that dozens of police officers have recently been taken off the beat to work on the new computer system, which has further weakened the presence of police around the State. It is, therefore, hard to believe the Premier when he says that he has finally come to the view that there is a need for additional police. I am conscious that Sergeant John Yates, the police officer in the township of Meekatharra, was reported by the ABC as saying that his officers were struggling to cope with the alarming growth in the town's crime rate this year, and he detailed the crime rate. When describing some of the difficulties in that town, Sergeant Yates was reported as saying -

"The staff members themselves get a lot more tied up in arrests.

"It drains the resources of staff, it drains the resources, overtime is incurred preparing briefs, getting the briefs together, having people inside the cells for extended periods of time during the night, so we have to have people watching those people overnight for duty of care . . .

Members would be well and truly aware they could go from place to place and town to town detailing the need for additional police resources.

Members of the community of Western Australia are increasingly aware of why they have not been allocated the alleged benefits that would flow to them from the Government's contracting out, privatising of state assets and selling off of various of the State's infrastructure. The people of Western Australia have watched the Government engage in mismanagement of its affairs and seen the cost to them of that mismanagement. One of the clearest examples of this is the Matrix deal that is still losing \$1m a month, and has cost \$30m in total since the Government signed the contract. Western Australia was the only State in the Commonwealth to sign the Matrix deal. Inch by inch and bit by bit the Opposition has tracked down the Government's losses that flowed from this Matrix deal. Slowly and gradually the Opposition has got information out of this Government that claimed in the lead-up to its election would be an open and accountable Government. However, while in government it has made fundamental errors of judgment such as its decision on the Matrix contract. It then hid that contract until forced to reveal it. The details about the contract are slowly unfolding the saga of bad government and mismanagement before the eyes of the shaken community of Western Australia. Even today we find the Premier still arguing that there is some net benefit from this arrangement, despite the fact he has now decided not to extend the Matrix contract.

We know that the Government has spent \$90m in advertisements and promotion, and \$26m on consultants this year. In the process the people of Western Australia have realised that it did not improve key services for them one iota. The consultancies are expensive. The consultants benefit; they grow rich and lazy in their delivery of reports to the Government. We had one bizarre example of consultants who were appointed to the hospitals of Perth to consult the staff on equipment needed for the hospitals of Western Australia. The consultant's report detailed the equipment that was necessary. As the staff of the hospital said to the Opposition, and in turn to the people of Western Australia, the Government did not need to pay an expensive consultant to tell the people of Western Australia what everybody knows - that there is a shortage of equipment within the public hospital system of this State. Equipment is necessary and could possibly have been bought for many of those hospitals if

the Government had not already blown the taxpayers' resources, the Government's funds, on such expensive ticket items as consultants' fees in all areas of government departments and agencies.

Labor's priorities are as I have highlighted: Health, education and community safety. They have been our priorities in opposition. When we form a Government they will continue to be our priorities. While the finance brokers' scandal continues and the Minister for Fair Trading does his best at impersonating Pontius Pilate and tries to wash his hands of this whole disgrace, the Court Government wastes millions of dollars on pet projects such as the convention centre and the belltower. Those pet projects in the eyes of the people of Western Australia, especially regional Western Australians, become the symbols of the arrogance of this Government.

Hon Greg Smith: You have dropped the tunnel from that list now the people like it.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The tunnel is of minimal use to the people in Hon Greg Smith's electorate. The people of Kununurra are not terribly excited about the tunnel. When I attended the Kununurra agricultural show the other day I had a chat with the former Minister for Transport.

Hon M.J. Criddle: I will be interested to hear this.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I was listening to the people of Kununurra complain about the roads.

Hon M.J. Criddle: What roads were they complaining about?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: They were complaining about many roads.

Hon M.J. Criddle: They were not.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Yes, they were, minister.

Hon M.J. Criddle: I have just been there.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The minister was reopening the airport that I opened the other day. The minister has been flying around in planes too much.

Hon M.J. Criddle: When you are cornered you run off the track. You blokes did nothing to the roads in that area while you were up there.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I am not cornered. The minister should listen. We did not muck up the roads, as did the minister's lot. I will give him a few examples. Let us take the road that the Government built from Kununurra to Wyndham. An interesting feature of a road generally might be that it survives one wet season without being virtually impassable.

Hon M.J. Criddle: Watch what you say.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: It is in pretty grim shape. Has the minister driven down it?

Hon Greg Smith: I have, and there were machines everywhere. They are fixing it from one end to the other.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: They have only just finished building it and now they are fixing it. Is Hon Greg Smith telling me that there is machinery on that road?

Hon Greg Smith: There are machines on the Great Northern Highway.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: There is no machinery on the Great Northern Highway between Wyndham and the Halls Creeks turnoff. When was the machinery there?

Hon Greg Smith: It was about three weeks ago.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I was there about three weeks ago and I did not see it. I am surprised.

Hon Greg Smith: It was around the Parrys Creek turn off.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The contract was recently completed by BGC Pty Ltd. From my observations of the project, BGC has left a road that is bumpy and rough and already badly degraded. It is a road without guideposts or markers along the sides or a dividing line down the middle. That is what the Government has got for the multi-millions of dollars that were spent on that road. All I say to the Minister for Transport is that I do not accept that is good enough for the Great Northern Highway.

Hon M.J. Criddle: There is work being done throughout that area. A lot of work up there has not gone to contract yet. The term network contract has not gone to a contract yet and you said everything is contracted.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The minister has let the contract to the Kimberley.

Hon M.J. Criddle: I beg your pardon.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Has the minister let that contract?

Hon M.J. Criddle: The Leader of the Opposition can find out the facts.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I read an ABC press report.

Hon M.J. Criddle: Go find out your facts and come back and talk to me.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I point out to the minister that I read a media report that I believe said BGC was allocated the term contract for maintenance in the Kimberley.

Hon M.J. Criddle: It has preferred tender status. Obviously you do not know what you are talking about.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Hopefully the minister knows what he is talking about.

Interestingly enough, the conversation with Hon Eric Charlton was not exactly as he put the situation to "Inside Cover". When I was at the Kununurra agricultural show I was delighted to bump into my old friend Hon Eric Charlton. He was complaining to me about the state of the roads. He was on a motoring holiday around the State. I was pleased to see him.

Hon M.J. Criddle: One section of road between Newman and Kumarina has some problems.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Substantial problems.

Hon M.J. Criddle: I have just said that. He was travelling along the rest of the road, not merely that section.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: He was complaining bitterly about it.

Hon M.J. Criddle: No, he was not.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Yes, he was.

Hon M.J. Criddle: I talked to him this morning. You should check up on your rubbish.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: When I saw him he was complaining bitterly about it. The former Minister for Transport presided over the collapse of the road system of Western Australia. He destroyed Main Roads, aided and abetted by his successor when he contracted out and privatised parts of Main Roads to the point where its expertise has been stripped from it and it has no longer the resources to do the job. The former Minister for Transport, good bloke that he is -

Hon M.J. Criddle: You must go back over what you have just said. Read it tomorrow.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I have just said that he is a good bloke.

Hon M.J. Criddle: I am not talking about him; I am talking about what you are saying.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I believe that Hon Eric Charlton has it right; that is, the road system of Western Australia is in a mess.

Hon M.J. Criddle: That is not what he said.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: He was complaining about the roads he had just travelled on. Unfortunately I have to travel on them as well, as do so many of my constituents, who are not enthralled by the fact that the Government has had a tunnel built in Perth and left them with a road system in disarray. Not only are the roads unacceptable but also those same motorists are now sluggish by increased fuel prices, about which this Government is doing absolutely nothing.

Hon M.J. Criddle: When you blokes left government you were putting in \$300m; we are putting in about \$800m. You have not got a leg to stand on.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The Government has been spending most of the money on tunnels and bridges in the central business district, which is of minimal value to the people of the Agricultural Region, the Mining and Pastoral Region and the other country regions of Western Australia.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! This is turning into a debate between Hon Bob Thomas, when he is not on the phone, and Hon Greg Smith. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition has the call.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The desperate desire of this Government to waste taxpayers' funds in pursuit of its blind ideology of privatising and contracting out has become legend across the State. It has delivered to the regional areas of Western Australia a substantial problem. It will be a challenge for an incoming Labor administration, as the Labor Party recognises that we will be left with a degraded road system and a destroyed Main Roads, which is stripped of those resources in speciality areas such as bridge building and fixing potholes. Its expertise had been built up over decades of responding to those realities.

Hon Greg Smith: You said nobody in Western Australia had the expertise.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Nobody had the expertise that was previously available in Main Roads, which was second to none.

Hon Greg Smith interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! I appreciate the joint effort of a speech by the Leader of the Opposition and Hon Greg Smith but the Leader of the Opposition might proceed with the speech by himself.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The people of Western Australia have every reason to feel disgruntled and disappointed with this Government. The Government continues to seek to avoid proper examination of its record across a whole range of areas. A glaring example of that at the moment is that the Government has endeavoured to avoid proper examination of the finance brokers issue, and it is no more blatant than the reality we are faced with in this House where the Government has made it clear that it will not assist in re-establishing the select committee on the finance brokers issue. That is yet a further example of a government avoiding putting in place the necessary scrutiny of its administration, in particular the activities of the minister relating to the finance brokers issue. Only that select committee will have the opportunity of fully investigating the minister's culpability and responsibility to ensure the proper administration of the finance brokers industry.

Hon Greg Smith: A parliamentary inquiry would not have the resources, expertise or time to do it.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: That may be the case with members opposite, but it is certainly not the case as far as members on this side of the House are concerned. If the Government does not have members available, our members are ready to serve on a committee and to allocate their time to subject the Government to the scrutiny and accountability it deserves. After all, the Government claimed that when it was elected it would be all about open and accountable government, better government. Well, here is the opportunity to subject those claims to some scrutiny, subject the Government's performance to that crosscheck that comes from a committee of this place bringing witnesses before it.

Hon E.R.J. Dermer: Surely that would be being accountable.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Exactly, and that is something that this Government -

Hon E.R.J. Dermer: Avoids.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: - avoids, and regrettably I fear this Government is determined to avoid every way of getting that opportunity again. I have only been around this place for a short while, but I know the devices that are left to an Opposition as it tries to respond to this reality. The Address-in-Reply debate takes precedence over the Government's legislative program, and my own contribution to the Address-in-Reply debate will be a lengthy one until such time as the Government recognises the need to let the House consider and bring to resolution other matters that are also on the agenda.

Hon E.R.J. Dermer: Lengthy but no less relevant.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Indeed.

Hon Greg Smith: Lengthy but still irrelevant.

Hon E.R.J. Dermer: But the Government does not want to listen. It will suffer at the ballot box.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Those in the Labor Party, in response to the needs of the community of Western Australia, are getting on with the job. They are in contact with their constituents, on the phone, working hard, making sure that they are in contact with the people of Western Australia who are responding to the issues.

Hon Simon O'Brien: They are phoning us.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: They are responding to the issues.

Hon Simon O'Brien: They must be desperate, what with the Samaritans and gays, if they are talking to you. Of all the one-stop shops to go to if you want something fixed, go to the ALP!

Hon E.R.G. Dermer: Many Western Australians are desperate with this Government in place.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The public of Western Australia wants to ensure that there are more jobs and job security for the people of Western Australia. They want improved education and an improved education system. They want improved schools, schools with the resources and the staff to do the jobs. I will give those opposite an example of this. In response to the needs and the challenges of the numeracy and literacy problems of the students of Western Australia, the school system is failing its students, and it is not because the schools are staffed by uncommitted people - they are not; they are staffed by very committed people who are using their best endeavours to deliver a quality education.

Hon E.R.J. Dermer: The Government will not back them up.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Precisely. The government school system continues to concern the people of Western Australia, particularly the need for improved outcomes in the fields of literacy and numeracy. The tests that have been done of students throughout the country have revealed that Western Australia has substantial problems. In response to the questions that I have been asking over the years, the Government has delivered a variety of answers about how it is dealing with those problems, and it reels off programs and budget allocations. However, when we probe those programs and budget allocations, what becomes absolutely clear is the lack of resources and staff to back up those programs within the school system.

Hon Greg Smith: The Education budget when you were in government was \$900m. It is now \$1.5b - nearly double.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: No resources in terms of additional teaching staff are available to support those numeracy and literacy programs. No additional personnel have been allocated to those programs to deal with the failure of the school system to respond to the literacy and numeracy needs of the children of Western Australia.

I took the answers that were given by the Minister for Education in this Parliament about the programs that were allegedly available through this Government to assist with early childhood intervention and with the needs of children with literacy problems, and I circulated them widely to schools from the top to the bottom of my electorate. Despite the ban that the Government has placed on public servants and teachers to prevent them from talking to members of Parliament, information does flow pretty rapidly past the roadblocks that the Government has tried to put in their way, and we find that those teachers and school communities cannot get the personnel that they need at the cutting edge to make a significant impact upon the problems that are being experienced in the State of Western Australia. Staff are not available to the schools in the regions. Some funding programs have been given a lot of advertising and billboard space, and some of these programs have involved the expenditure of a lot of government money in terms of glossy brochures, head office personnel and consultants to devise the programs, yet no-one has been available to deliver those programs. There is no substance behind the Government's rhetoric. The Government's rhetoric has had no significant impact upon the needs of the student population of Western Australia for additional literacy and numeracy resources.

In marked contrast to that, a Labor administration will give real grunt and bite to the cutting edge of education in the classrooms and schools across this State to significantly impact upon the needs with which those students are faced. Again, I draw members' attention to the commitments declared on behalf of the Labor Opposition by Dr Geoffrey Gallop, Leader of the Opposition, in his address dated Thursday, 27 July, to a packed Town Hall in Fremantle where he stated -

Labor knows that putting money into education is an investment in the future. Our future is in knowledge and knowledge-based industries - the new economy that I spoke of earlier. No education in the 21st century means no future. It is as simple as that. We have to value education more. We can no longer accept scandalous drop-out rates in our schools.

For those of us who are familiar with the country regions of Western Australia, the drop-out rates within those regions are more scandalous than they are for the rest of the State. Dr Gallop's speech continued -

Part of this involves recognising teachers as professionals. To achieve this, Labor is looking at a whole new way of dealing with teaching professionalism, starting with our support for a system of teacher registration and a College of Teaching. Valuing education also means making sure that the school system delivers skills and confidence to students. But too many are slipping through the system. To have up to 30 per cent of children struggle to reach the national benchmarks in literacy and numeracy is just too high. A concerted attack on literacy and numeracy is long overdue. I am pleased to be able to announce -

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon J.A. Cowdell): Order, I believe the Leader of the Opposition's lines may be stolen.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council is in fact stealing the lines from the Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly, but those lines have already been stolen by the whip on behalf of both of us! The whip has accurately pinpointed the fact that Dr Gallop committed to provide 110 extra teachers to provide specialist tuition for children struggling to cope with literacy and numeracy. That is part of the concerted attack on literacy and numeracy that is, in our view, long overdue. Dr Gallop further stated that the Opposition was pleased to be able to announce Labor's plans for a new \$20m literacy and numeracy program. That \$20m will be funded by cutting the Government's use of consultants by 20 per cent and will provide those 110 extra teachers about which Hon Bob Thomas just spoke. Dr Gallop further stated -

This means that there will be a dedicated resource in schools to help teachers provide more individual attention to children needing this specialised or extra help. It will also provide 32 highly-skilled experts located in District Offices to provide 'teach-the-teacher' expertise. This expertise will help develop the

professional abilities of teachers themselves. They will have better skills to help their students overcome their literacy and numeracy problems. We will also place a special emphasis on the skills of teaching English as a second language - so vital in helping migrant children and children from remote Aboriginal communities.

The Leader of the Opposition concluded his remarks on this section of education by stating -

Getting the basics of literacy and numeracy right when children are young is essential. For this reason, our plan concentrates on the early years of schooling. As those of you who have young children know, parents are often a critical part of their children's educational success. Parents want to help and be part of their kids schooling, but need the confidence and skills to be able to help. For this reason, our plan includes a new partnership with parents. Parents should be involved in teaching literacy and numeracy skills to their own children. This partnership will be properly resourced and targeted, and is central to the success of the plan as whole.

I will interpose on those comments that I have been quoting of the Leader of the Opposition in the other place in his headline speech on the Labor Party's positive agenda for when it forms Government; I will interpose my personal experience as a parent. I have faced the problem in my own household, as I know have other members. I have dealt with educational challenges with which my children have been faced.

I have been lucky enough to have as my wife a person with the qualifications of a teacher of English. She has a degree and a Diploma of Education that she has put to good use as a teacher of English as a second language, principally with migrants. She is a student of language who has worked in the field of linguistics and the acquisition of language. Many years ago she conducted the first comprehensive study of Aboriginal English across Western Australia, which she did in collaboration with her more senior colleagues from the University of Western Australia. My wife worked with linguists such as Dr Susan Calder. My wife has become familiar with the problems confronting young people, particularly those from a non-English speaking background. She has developed some detailed knowledge of the techniques that can assist children and adults in the acquisition of language. It is something that she has worked on vigorously.

In our own home we were confronted with the challenges of recognising learning difficulties among our children, specifically my eldest son, who was not picking up the literacy skills that were in keeping with his age. My wife single-handedly devoted herself to that challenge. She went out and sought the expertise that was on offer from the departments and agencies. She then found herself being channelled by the system of support towards the expensive private consultancies aimed at assisting children with learning difficulties. My wife went from one to the other as she tried to find a program that would work to assist our son in acquiring the necessary literacy skills that would enable him to succeed in his primary education and that would equip him with the skills needed for his development as he moved through the school system. The process was very expensive and intense. It required a large allocation of the family's personal and financial resources and endless amounts of my wife's time. Eventually she found an expensive program consisting of a set of books that she was able to put to good use for our son. The program appeared to be tailor-made for him and indeed it helped him with his problems of dyslexia and with other learning difficulties that are much harder to classify. My wife was able to succeed in equipping our son with skills that got him through primary school. He now thrives and flourishes in high school. He has accelerated development and his competency is now matching his ambition.

Hon Greg Smith: It is hard when there are competing demands from other children.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: We are lucky because although we are a single-income family, we have a parliamentarian's income. It allows my wife to allocate large amounts of time. As a result of that experience my wife has picked up a fair amount of expertise. She has also been studying psychology at university and has specialised in the issues of child learning. She has made herself available as a volunteer to the government school system in the metropolitan area and works in schools that do not have the resources or personnel to provide tailor-made programs to meet the needs of children struggling with literacy problems.

She is pleased to be able to work as a volunteer. She would prefer to be employed, but no offers are made these days as the Government has cut back resources in this area. She has worked as a volunteer to help families faced with learning difficulties. Parents are being channelled by advisers to the schools to find the consultants, the reading clinics and the like, which many people cannot afford. They do not have the family resources necessary to equip children with the support needed. Therefore, my wife's response is to say to parents, "There is another way. You could do what I have done; that is, allocate your time to work through some programs." Some parents are keen to do so. However, those programs require the acquisition of books which are not available from the Government or from the school system to assist parents to work through those successful programs. I am delighted therefore to recognise that the programs a Labor administration will introduce when we form government will target that exact area of need.

Hon Barry House: In 2053.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: That is wishful thinking on the part of the honourable Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education. The member will find that as a result of the ineptitude of his Government, he will be standing in this position as Leader of the Opposition in double-quick time. There will not be many takers for the position.

Hon Bob Thomas: He won one vote when he stood last time; that is, his own vote.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: No, he did not. I am sure that if he were the only Liberal standing, he would have my vote!

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon J.A. Cowdell): Order! We might be straying a little here, members.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: With Hon Barry House's attitude, he will end up on the opposition benches in double-quick time, if not as the Leader of the Opposition. He would make a commendable Leader of the Opposition. In fact, I commend him to members opposite as I am sure he would do a good job.

Hon Greg Smith: I will stay on the government backbench after the election.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Is Hon Greg Smith joining the Labor Party after the next election?

Hon Greg Smith: No.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I was about to say that I have news for the member: The Labor Party has strict membership rules.

I am delighted to learn that the Labor Party nationally has produced a variety of programs, which, when taken in conjunction with the policies of the state Labor Party in Western Australia, will assist the people of this State to progress in leaps and bounds within the education system. Many needs within my electorate will be well served by some of these changes. I will give some examples. I refer to my experience of the bush schools. Teachers come in, too often for short periods, to regularly discover in the first few months in those schools what their predecessors discovered and learnt about the various problems faced in those bush schools in the small towns in the communities in regional Western Australia, before they left and took their expertise elsewhere. What I have recognised should happen is exactly what the federal Labor Party and the state Labor Party will be able to put on offer when the national and state administrations in this country work in tandem. Clearly there is the need for school teachers across this vast and great State to have access to communications technology and Internet sites which will provide notice board-type advice to teachers probing various areas of educational challenge when they search the Net as part of the delivery of information about programs that have worked in schools. That notice board-type phenomenon that has emerged on the web in many other areas will provide teachers with the opportunity to share information. There is clearly a need for dedicated chat rooms that will assist teachers in the remote parts of regional Western Australia so that they can involve themselves in discussion about the educational challenges with which they are faced in schools which share so much in common but which do not share geographical propinquity. Too regularly, teachers who sit at opposite ends of vast deserts at opposite ends of the State are not easily equipped with the opportunities to meet or to discuss matters. They need all the facilitation possible so that there can be a cross-fertilisation of ideas and a sharing of information to enable them to benefit from the experience of their predecessors in the field, who have picked up enormous expertise that is too regularly lost to the bush with the fast and rapid turnover of staff with which those schools are faced. There is a real need to build on that expertise. That has not happened under the current Government, but it will happen under Labor administrations when the policies of both the state and national Parliamentary Labor Party are put into operation. The people of Western Australia, in the regional areas of the State especially, will be the beneficiaries of that initiative.

The education commitments made by the Leader of the Opposition, Dr Geoff Gallop, on Thursday, 27 July, to the packed Town Hall audience in Fremantle concluded with these remarks -

... our plan includes a new partnership with parents. Parents should be involved in teaching literacy and numeracy skills to their own children. This partnership will be properly resourced and targeted, and is central to the success of the plan as a whole.

We will also ensure that there is a greater focus on the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills in teacher-training courses at University.

Labor is not prepared to see the education system, particularly the public system, fail our young people.

Our \$20 million injection into literacy and numeracy, and the types of communication skills children will be needing for their futures, will go a long way in re-establishing an education system that our children deserve.

That positive agenda, as identified by the state parliamentary Labor leader, will inspire the people of Western Australia to continue moving in their current direction of seeking to support the election of a Gallop-led Labor Administration. Regrettably, each time the Labor Party comes forward with positive commitments and a firm agenda, members opposite are negative and critical and whinge and carp about every Labor initiative.

Hon M.J. Criddle: What is your policy for road funding?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The Minister for Transport will have every opportunity to hear Labor's policies on transport.

Hon M.J. Criddle: That is good.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: What will be the Government's policies for the election?

Hon M.J. Criddle: Our policies are all mapped out.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: What will be the Government's policies for road funding and roads beyond the next election?

Hon M.J. Criddle: You clearly saw it in the budget.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon J.A. Cowdell): Order, it is the Leader of the Opposition's speech, not the minister's speech.

Hon B.M. Scott: Let us hear what you will do to transport.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Members opposite will hear a lot more about the positive agenda of the Labor Administration. They should stop their carping and negative whingeing. They have already been given an opportunity to hear about the positive things we will do in the fields of community safety, police and education. Today, in the other House, the colleagues of members opposite were able to hear at length from the shadow Minister for Education as he outlined some major initiatives to be taken by the future Labor Administration when we form a Government after the next state election.

Hon M.J. Criddle: Don't get too excited.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I agree that we can never presume upon the people of Western Australia and we will not. However, we will make sure they have a chance to hear our agenda, to compare it with the Government's track record and to decide whether they believe the Government will deliver on the agenda it outlined, not only in the speech delivered on behalf of the Government by the Administrator in this House, but also the other commitments made by the Government if it were to be re-elected. We know what the Government has said and the people of Western Australia have every reason to disbelieve so many of those claims.

When the Government is not being negative it is regularly being forced - as in the case of the police numbers - to adopt a policy of catching up with the Labor Party; that is, adopting as its own the policies that we announce. Although from time to time that catches out some members, like Hon Bruce Donaldson and Hon Bill Stretch who have not been able to catch up in time, too regularly there is evidence that this Government is simply trying to play catch-up in politics and trying to re-announce what has already been announced as Labor's commitments. The Government then tries to package that policy approach as its own. In fact, it is derivative and has not been fast enough off the mark. It has not been listening to the community of Western Australia. It will find that we, as a Labor Administration, will respond to those needs much better than it has been able to do in the long seven and a half years it has been in office.

Hon Bob Thomas: We won't take country people for granted like the Government did.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Absolutely not. Such an approach to government and to policy development is not one deserving of a Government in Western Australia, and nor is it deserving of the people it represents or should be representing. The people who live here and want to stay in this State need and deserve a Government that is committed to advancing the interests of all Western Australians.

Western Australians do not want the budget spent solely on consultants, advertising and pet projects in the central business district. A Labor Government will shift the money wasted by this Government into key areas. I have already mentioned community safety and education. Our public hospital system is just as important. The effective management of hospitals and health care is a key responsibility of Governments. Under this Government, those critical institutions lurch from crisis to crisis, crippled by a lack of funding, increasing costs, unnecessary bureaucracy and a lack of government focus and commitment. The unhealthy state of our health system is reflected in the relevant statistics. We know that at the end of last financial year, 10 500 patients were on the waiting lists, which is a long way short of the 50 per cent cut promised by this Government at the last election. We know that 2 575 people wait longer for operations than is clinically desirable. We know that since the last election, the median waiting time for operations has increased to five and a half months, and we know, as

the people of Western Australia also know, that recurrent funding in real per capita terms has been cut by 0.5 per cent. That equates to a \$9.4m cut in funding after inflation and population growth are taken into account. Only \$2.8m has been allocated in this year's budget to the five major teaching hospitals for capital works. There is a clear need for commonsense to be brought back into the Health Department, rather than the constant restructuring that has occurred in the seven and a half years that this Government has been in office. Its motto has been, "When in doubt, restructure. When in doubt about what to do, simply change the name, the labels and the structure."

Hon Bob Thomas: And have a review. Blame the hospitals; blame the staff!

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Hon Bob Thomas' interjection reflects exactly the approach adopted by this Government; that is, blame the system and the staff. Hon Bruce Donaldson said earlier that we should blame the police. According to the Government, it is all the staff's fault and the problem is in the health system. In fact, it is a problem with government policy and priority, and with the Government itself. This Government fails to recognise that its priorities are wrong. It is preoccupied with its monuments like the belltower and pet projects like the convention centre.

Hon B.K. Donaldson: This is like the Labor Party's opposition to the Graham Farmer Freeway; yet 80 000 cars go through it every day.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Not too many Kununurra or Esperance residents go through that tunnel.

Hon Bob Thomas: People from Albany do not like it either.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! Members appear to be restive. The Leader of the Opposition should address the Chair, not a restive back bench, or front bench, as the case may be.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: What was the name of the town in which the people had to build their own belltower?

Hon B.K. Donaldson: Bolgart.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I had to send them some money so they could build their belltower.

Hon Cheryl Davenport: Only the Labor politicians sent them money.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The people of Bolgart recognised that the only way they could get a belltower for that community was if they did it themselves. With their fundraising efforts they were able to get something they knew the Government would never deliver to them; that is, a belltower provided at taxpayers' expense.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: And they made a financial profit, as the belltower on the foreshore will.

Hon Bob Thomas: And pigs will fly!

Hon TOM STEPHENS: As Hon Bob Thomas said, pigs will fly.

Hon Ken Travers: Who gave most of the money to that project?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Labor politicians.

Hon Simon O'Brien: We just had that.

Hon Ken Travers: It was worth saying again.

Hon Simon O'Brien: No; it wasn't worth saying the first time.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Western Australia used to be the premier State in reference to public health and the public health system. Now the truth of it is -

Hon Bob Thomas: We had the world's best hospital system.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members! This is not a tag-team exercise with the Leader of the Opposition doing every third phrase.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The system now is taking no major initiatives, and that is having a dramatic impact on public health because of the poor policies and the wrong priorities of the coalition Government. The Metropolitan Health Service Board is just another layer of useless bureaucracy, which will cost \$17.7m over the next four years. The current Government chose to put that wasteful structure in place in the absence of policies for which resources could be appropriately allocated to respond to the health needs of the people of Western Australia. The Labor Administration led by Dr Gallop will abolish that board and will put that money back into the area where it is needed; that is, patient care. That is where that money belongs.

Hon Bob Thomas: An extra \$1m will be put into the patient assisted travel scheme immediately.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: King Edward Memorial Hospital, as members will know, is under-funded and under threat. It is crying out for the resources that will enable it to continue its role as a pre-eminent institution looking after the health needs of women across this State. It needs a major injection of money to replace outdated equipment and to upgrade its facilities. Labor supports that hospital as a centre of excellence for women.

Hon Simon O'Brien: We have seen all your candidates protesting outside for the benefit of the cameras. It is all stunts.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: They are putting on display the fact that, unlike the Government, we are committed to the support of that institution. The Government wants to close it; we want to keep it, support it, bolster it and strengthen it so it can continue as the centre of excellence for the women of Western Australia.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: So do we.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: If that is the Government's approach, it has a funny way of going about it.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: Why?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Because the Government has denied that institution the resources necessary to do its job. The Government has not made it possible for that institution to function adequately, as the staff will tell anyone with ears. Labor will upgrade the existing facilities and address the critical staffing shortages.

Hon Bob Thomas: You are looking only at the asset sale value.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: The asset sale value?

Hon Bob Thomas: That is all you are doing.

Hon Ken Travers: Do you support the closure of King Edward Memorial Hospital?

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: What for?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members!

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: It is a pre-eminent women's hospital.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: It is a pity Hon Derrick Tomlinson cannot convince the Minister for Health and his government colleagues of that.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: I do not need to. He knows it, as does anybody in Western Australia.

Hon Bob Thomas: Kevin Prince tried to sell it. He took a minute to Cabinet to sell it.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: I was not in Cabinet to note it.

Hon Ken Travers: You should have been.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: That's right. Take note of that and put it in *Hansard*.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I am sure Hansard has heard that interjection. It need not be underlined further.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The Government is also responsible for the savage cuts that have been made to the patient assisted travel scheme since it has been in office. That scheme is an important part of looking after the health needs of residents in regional and remote areas of this State. Under this Government the system has been eroded and the funds depleted in such a way as to significantly disadvantage country residents. It is all the more surprising to find that the National Party, whose constituents have been disadvantaged by these cuts, has allowed this to take place without kicking up a fuss. The National Party professes to be the representative of country interests but in this crucial area allows those interests to be ridden roughshod over. We know that for patients travelling in motor vehicles to hospital care the patient assisted travel scheme still delivers a rate that is 2¢ a kilometre lower than when the ALP was last in government seven and a half years ago. Instead of the allocation rising, the allocation was cut and the program is now worth less than it was worth when we were last in office. Labor will put an additional \$1m a year into the PAT scheme and it will review the whole scheme and its administration. There are many simple examples of where this scheme can be assisted by some clever lateral thinking on the part of the Government. For instance, it continues to amaze me that the Government has not negotiated to get a PATS airfare contract from one of the major airline operators in this State, either Airlink Pty Ltd or Ansett Australia. It amazes me that the residents of the township of Newman are still required to travel by road when they need hospital care either in Newman or in Perth when Ansett Airlines operates a major jet airline service into that town by virtue of a contract with BHP.

Hon Ken Travers: Do they have to drive to Perth?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: They must drive to Perth. They are not allowed to go by plane from Newman, unless special circumstances apply.

Hon Ken Travers: So someone puts his broken leg under the steering wheel and drives to the physiotherapist?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The standard procedure is to travel by road; that is despite the fact that a jet service operates into that town twice weekly.

Hon Ken Travers: That is callous.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: We have a callous Government in office. Many other parts of this State have a similar rule in which the movement of passengers by road is obligatory. That includes many parts of the Murchison and Gascoyne in which similar callous disregard is shown for the interests of patients. Patients are regularly forced to travel by road across vast distances in inhospitable climates, through the heat of the summer or the floods of the wet season, in their efforts to try to obtain the assistance of medical experts, specialists and the like.

In the example of Newman, it still confounds me that the Government allows this reality to be visited upon the people there. Despite the fact that on two days a week, Mondays and Fridays, the jet service into Newman is regularly well patronised -

Hon Ken Travers: How much do they get for travelling in their motor vehicles?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: It is 2¢ less than patients used to get when we were in office. On Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays the plane to and from Newman is largely empty. Some 10 to 15 seats being occupied is regularly the order of the day, so upwards of 30 or 40 empty seats are available. One would assume that the Government could quite easily come to an arrangement with Ansett and Broken Hill Proprietary Co Ltd, which are effectively the joint operators of the service, whereby at a lower cost than the cost of a patient moving by road transport or, if not lower, certainly the same cost, a patient could be moved by plane. The Government has left the patients of Newman with no air service.

Hon Ken Travers: You are making a very positive suggestion.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I hope that the Labor Administration, when we form government, will be able to quite easily tackle some of these problems that have not been a priority for this Government because it has been distracted by belltowers, convention centres, contracting out, pursuit of ideology and monuments to itself rather than the needs and interests of ordinary Western Australians, especially those in the regional parts of the State. The Labor Party will subject the patient assisted travel scheme to a review of the adequacy of its funding and the eligibility criteria. Among other things, we will be looking to include again centres such as Mandurah and Pinjarra that were excluded by the coalition in its earlier attack on the scheme. Under Labor the PAT scheme will be a better scheme and more in tune with the people living in the regions.

In health this Government's privatisation and outsourcing agenda is particularly disturbing, showing a lack of transparency and accountability with the public's money. For example, Joondalup and Peel hospitals have fallen into the hands of private operators. This has resulted in public patients being charged private fees by specialists. Royal Perth Hospital's catering service was privatised and then the hospital subsequently baled out of that arrangement. The Government even tried to privatise the State's breast screening service. Market economics in public health has been shown not to work because so many aspects of that work require public money and government intervention. The private health sector needs more patients, not fewer, to make a profit. The Government of Western Australia needs to work in the interests of delivering health to the citizens of Western Australia. That is at odds with the motives of private hospitals.

The worst is yet to come, unfortunately. There are now plans to privatise the outpatient services in our hospitals. Despite the denials of the Government, the Opposition has been lucky enough to obtain internal documentation, the minutes of meetings and the proposals that were afoot which would have led to the outsourcing and privatisation of the outpatient services in our hospitals. No matter how much the Government bleats its innocence and says that is not its intention, no-one in Western Australia should have any doubt whatsoever that the outpatient services of the hospitals are at risk of being privatised if this Government is returned to office. The only reason that option is off the Government's agenda at the moment is that it was caught out because the documents were leaked and have become public; the meetings have been exposed; and the plans worked up in the bowels of this Government's operations have been brought into the light of day.

A policy has been submitted to Cabinet to privatise outpatient services in hospitals. The plan is about shifting costs to the Commonwealth. I am not opposed to that, but I do not believe it should be achieved by using this device of privatisation. A decent State Government would have taken on the Commonwealth and would have had this matter resolved in favour of the people of Western Australia. We all know there would have been plenty of opportunities for that to happen had the State Government displayed good leadership. The Federal Government was desperate to implement dramatic taxation changes. It would have gone to endless lengths to appease a determined State Government across a range of fields to get its cooperation in the transition to the

GST. Instead, this Government has copped the GST without any of the benefits. In the absence of any others, one benefit would have been sorting out the health resources needed from the Commonwealth.

I doubt whether the Commonwealth Government is yet aware of the State Government's policy - I suspect not. I suspect that it has not been consulted about the approach the State Government is considering. A state Labor Government will make the Commonwealth Government's obligations clear and will insist that it accept those obligations. It is only under a Labor Government that money will be put back into the public hospital system. That will happen because, unlike members opposite, the Labor Party believes in the public hospital system. Members opposite seem to oppose that system and believe that the only decent institutions are privatised institutions. They appear to have no faith in the value of running a public health system.

There is real value in a mixed economy in any Administration, and the Labor Party believes in a mixed economy. It also believes in the Government's maintaining the delivery of services in the core areas of health, education and public transport. Unlike this Government, a Labor Government will not be afraid to resource those core areas. I could cite many examples in my electorate that clearly illustrate this Government's lack of commitment to the public health system. The Newman community has waited for more than six months for the arrival of a replacement dentist. The township is in desperate need of dental services and has been complaining long and loud about the absence of those services. I am pleased to note that my colleague the candidate for Ningaloo, Samantha Ogden, was able to tell the people of Newman just last Friday that as a result of the work done by many - I am sure members realise that I will not sing their praises too often, so I will not name all those who have pursued these results -

Hon Ken Travers: I am sure the majority of those who pursued it were good Labor members.

Hon Simon O'Brien: And as a result they have been dumped by the party.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Ms Ogden told the people of Newman that finally the hard work had paid off, that the dentist would arrive on 21 August and that the dental facility would be cleaned up that very day. I gather that \$70 000-worth of funds is finally being spent on cleaning up that facility. The new dentist's predecessor came back to town to collect the old equipment and take it away because the new equipment was arriving. However, regrettably the contract for the new dentist is for only six months, which is just enough time to get the Government through the next state election. God help the people of Newman if this Government is still in office after the election -

Hon Ken Travers: They can get a toothache only once every four years when the coalition is in government.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: That is right. While this Government is in office, some of these towns can get dental services only in the lead-up to a state election, otherwise they are on their own. Another example is the people of Derby, who have been -

Hon Barry House: If you want an example, here is one. I cannot help but notice the contrast between the Premier's speech at our conference last weekend and the garbage that is coming from you.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: It is called a tale of two cities. That is the fantasy. I am dealing with the facts. The facts are a stranger to this Government. This Government has been run by peddlers of untruths since the late 1980s and early 1990s. This Government has been peddling untruths to the people of Western Australia, of which the most recent example is the Administrator's speech that was delivered in this House for the Government. Premier Richard Court is one of the protagonists in the whole pantomime of fantasy in which the coalition has been engaged for many years. The Government parades itself as being committed to open and accountable government and to giving people a social dividend. However, the people of Derby have a hospital that at present does not even have hot water. The patients of that hospital cannot get a hot bath or shower.

Hon Barry House: What are you doing as the local member if that is the problem?

Hon Ken Travers: Did the Premier mention that in his speech at the conference?

Hon Simon O'Brien: He certainly did not.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I am sure he did not. People from the township of Derby have been on the phone and fax to me over the past few days to complain bitterly about the fact that they have a hospital without hot water.

Hon Simon O'Brien: Why does the hospital have no hot water?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Presumably because this Government does not give that hospital the funds necessary to allow it to maintain the basics. We have hospitals in my electorate where the defibrillators fail in emergencies and people die. We have hospitals in my electorate that used to provide maternity services, but since this Government has been in office women are no longer allowed to have their babies delivered within those hospitals. We have hospitals in this State that are stripped of the resources and the staff necessary for their

survival. We have hospitals that can no longer deliver and meet the health needs of the people of Western Australia. They are the facts, and what the Government is saying is the fantasy.

This Government has failed to commit any funding to stage 4 of Derby Hospital. It made that commitment in 1992. Derby stage 4 has still not been built, and in this year's budget estimates Health Commissioner Bansemer said that no plans or even cost estimates are available to government for Derby stage 4.

Hon N.F. Moore: How much has been spent in Broome?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: For the frail aged care facility that is needed in Broome, absolutely nothing. The elderly people of Broome have to leave that town and be shunted off to towns hundreds of kilometres away. This is a disgrace on the part of members of this Government and on the part of their federal colleagues. It is a litany of sins across all areas of government activity.

Hon N.F. Moore: The member should look at the real world.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The real world is not found in a convention centre. The Leader of the House thinks that the real world is a convention centre, a belltower and a tunnel. That may be the member's real world, but people do not live in tunnels, up belltowers or in convention centres; they live in the real world where they need schools, hospitals, community safety, policing services and public transport. What do they have instead? We have belltowers, convention centres and tunnels; these are the preoccupations of this Government. That might be Hon Norman Moore's real world. The member should look at the unfair impact of increased Medicare premiums for people aged over 30 throughout regional and rural areas where no or few private health services are available.

Look again at the most recent example of the township of Newman. The patients in that township are still seeking access to doctors, the women would like access to the occasional service of a woman doctor, and many people would regularly like assistance from and access to specialists, but instead they are faced with government neglect and the need to travel hundreds of kilometres to Port Hedland to access those specialists despite the circumstances I described earlier relating to the airfares. All of my Labor colleagues have been coming up with initiatives and suggestions one after the other, instead of the whingeing, carping, negative criticism by the Government of the positive reform agenda that Labor will implement. We have seen a downgrading of facilities in regional areas and the unfair impact of the 1 per cent Medicare levy above the 26th parallel for high-income earners who are paid more as an incentive to work there.

It is in response to those realities that the Leader of the Opposition, Dr Gallop, in his address on Thursday, 27 July made a variety of commitments in response to the needs of our hospital and health care system. That program is a bold agenda, the first parts of which are clearly spelt out in those commitments, apart from the commitment of an extra \$25m to King Edward Memorial Hospital. The Labor Party is also committed to restoring a public health unit in the Health Department as a pre-eminent and dynamic facility as it was under Labor.

Hon Cheryl Davenport: It was under Labor, but it is no longer there.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: It was; that is right. Hon Cheryl Davenport accurately describes that role of the public health unit. It operated under Labor in the early 1980s and 1990s, but has simply been stripped from the people of Western Australia. The Labor Party is committed to giving all Western Australians a well-managed, accessible and high-quality public hospital and health system. In his address, Dr. Gallop stated -

^Putting more resources into the public hospital system is a key priority under Labor. When I say public hospital system, I mean public, not the hybrid system we have found developing under this current Government. Only a Labor Government is able to say that there will be no more privatisation of public hospitals and mean it. The Labor Party has stated its support for King Edward as the hospital for all Western Australian women. I have described the other commitments that deal with the abolition of the board and the funds that will flow from that and where they will be put back and made available to the people of Western Australia.

In the policy commitments of the Leader of the Opposition in the fields of health, education and community safety there are a number of well presented, well thought out and positive initiatives that will be implemented by the incoming Gallop Administration. They stand in marked contrast to the neglect that this Government has meted out to these areas of key concern to the ordinary citizens of Western Australia, particularly country people.

We have talked briefly of the need to tackle the apprehensions people have about community safety and law and order. That is addressed in part by the resourcing issue for the Police Service. We have talked about the challenges in education and the need to enhance opportunities for students in years 11 and 12. We need to tackle the problem of student accommodation in the metropolitan area and many other parts of the State. There are towns in which facilities for year 11 and 12 students will be at full strength only when they get appropriate

student accommodation facilities so that the number of students attending can be bolstered and thus justify full year 11 and 12 programs. Kununurra is an example of one such town. We have spoken of the need for additional teachers and support resources for students enrolled through the schools of isolated and distance education program.

In reference to my own electorate there is wide concern from ordinary Western Australians about their neighbourhoods. They want to see improved safety and higher quality health and education services. People, not only in regional and remote areas, want to know where the Government has been as it does not recognise that these are the key issues. The public sees this Government as being distracted. There is an enormous gap between the Government's record and the aspirations of the community. The Government's purported focus on law and order issues has most aptly illustrated the gap between fact and fantasy. For two years the Government failed to deliver the Criminal Property Confiscation Bill. It has only recently been introduced into this Parliament. We are still waiting for a covert operations Bill and a new Police Act to replace the outdated legislation under which our Police Service has been forced to operate. Despite the focus on law and order, there was no mention of the latter in yesterday's government agenda as delivered to this Chamber. We can only conclude that the agenda will proceed without that key component. We are also waiting for a comprehensive approach to prostitution. The Government appears to be completely hamstrung and confounded by its internal divisions. It is unable to tackle these matters in the interests of the broad Western Australian community. It fails to tackle the appropriate use of policing and avoids the reality or the impression of police corruption associated with prostitution and the previous containment policy. Instead, the Government has consigned the issue to the too hard basket, which is overflowing with other such examples. The Government has distracted itself in a range of areas.

The use of consultants in the Kimberley region is a good example of how taxpayers' funds have been wasted. I am indebted to my friend and future colleague Carol Martin, the endorsed Labor candidate for the Kimberley, for the provision of her observations on the consultants reports issue. In response to the most recent report, she outlined how the Government has wasted so many opportunities which have left people in her region shaking their heads in disbelief at the way the Government spends the hard-earned dollars it receives from regions such as the Kimberley. Many regional parts of Western Australia are the producers of wealth. Much of the financial resource available to government comes from the wealth generated in various parts of my electorate, whether it be in the iron ore industry of the Pilbara, the gold industry of the goldfields and Murchison, or the diamond, pearling, fishing, oil and gas industries. In response to the wealth generated for the coffers of government, funds are expropriated from that area to set up monuments in the central business district of Perth, such as the convention centre, the belltower, the duplicate Narrows bridge and the tunnel, and the essential needs of people in those areas are ignored.

Hon M.J. Criddle: You cannot ignore the fact that we have spent substantially more in the country than in the city. You are talking rubbish.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: How much all up did the minister's tunnel cost? Was it cheap?

Hon M.J. Criddle: You know the figure; it was about \$375m.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Plus the add ons.

Hon M.J. Criddle: You will carry on like that forever. We have spent substantially more in the country than we have spent in the city. Consider that first, and relate it to what you just said.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The Government has become preoccupied with expenditure in the CBD and adjacent areas to the detriment of country people.

Hon M.J. Criddle: Expressions of interest were called in your area recently for work on 163 kilometres of the Mt Magnet-Leinster road. That is major funding.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: How many more kilometres could have been constructed if the Government had not built the tunnel?

Hon M.J. Criddle: You didn't listen to what I said.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Communities north of Broome are still waiting for the state government allocation in support of the federal contribution for the much needed improvement of the road to Cape Leveque. That is desperately needed by industry.

Hon M.J. Criddle: If you had been in Broome with me the other day, when I was up at the Lombadina Community, Broome and Derby, you would know what the Government is doing.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The minister flew in aboard his plane to reopen the airstrip I opened two weeks earlier. He landed on the airstrip.

Hon M.J. Criddle: That is how far out of contact you are with your own people.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: No, that is not the case. In this year's budget, the Government spent less than 1 per cent on the roads in the Kimberley region, yet it has endless millions for its tunnel. That is a disgrace, and the minister calls himself a National Party member!

Hon M.J. Criddle: You are getting excited about something of which you know nothing.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I have good reason to be excited. This Government has failed to appreciate the needs of those people in the regional parts of Western Australia. It continues to neglect them, hopefully at its own peril.

Hon M.J. Criddle: I was in that area and listened in a reasonable manner to those people. We put in place a program to construct the road about which you are talking. You are out of touch with your own electorate.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: How soon will that road be finished? This Government has been in office for seven and a half years and it has done nothing. Time is up!

Several members interjected.

Hon N.F. Moore: Tell us about the Petrochemical Industries Co Ltd plant. Talk about wasted money.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! The Leader of the House will come to order. We will have one speaker at a time.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The Government has had seven and a half years to tackle the issues of which the people of the regional parts of Western Australia and I are speaking. In that time, the Government has not delivered. A great deal needs to be done on those roads, yet this Government has not tackled the issue of roads.

Hon M.J. Criddle: Let us deal with the road program in your area. The Labor Party did absolutely nothing when it was in government.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Is it not the case that the Government has spent less than 1 per cent on the roads in the Kimberley?

Hon M.J. Criddle: When you sit down I will deal with this.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The shadow Minister for Transport, the member for Armadale, who has done a thorough analysis of the Government's figures, assures me that the Government is spending less than 1 per cent on the roads in the Kimberley region. That is not good enough. In seven and a half years, what has the Government done on the Cape Leveque road? I understand that the Government is looking after the roads around Binnu.

Hon M.J. Criddle: Of course. I look after all roads.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: No, the minister does not; that is the problem. Under this minister, the roads at Binnu are doing very well.

Hon Ray Halligan: Does John Hyde like the tunnel?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I think a John Hyde who lives in Kununurra is yet to use the tunnel. The people of Kununurra, Newman, Wyndham, Esperance and Carnarvon get precious little value out of that tunnel.

Hon Muriel Patterson: Are you suggesting that country people never come to the city?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Nor do the people of Albany get much use out of that tunnel.

Hon Muriel Patterson: Country people come to the city weekly.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The member is out of touch if she thinks that the people of the regional parts of Western Australia are enthused about that tunnel. They recognise that vast amounts of taxpayers' funds that could have been spent improving their road system have been wasted on the tunnel, the belltower and the convention centre.

Hon N.F. Moore: Where did the money for the convention centre come from? It came from the sale of an asset that you would never have sold. You would never have had the money because you would never have sold the asset. That's your problem.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: Which particular asset has exclusively funded the convention centre?

Hon N.F. Moore: The gas pipeline, if you cannot remember, which you would never have sold. You would have spent the money 10 000 times over on other things.

Hon Ken Travers: We are paying extra for our gas as a result.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: How will the Government fund the southern railway?

Hon N.F. Moore: That is for you to find out. You are the alternative Government. Tell us what you will do.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! The Leader of the House will come to order. It is a good thing there are only two minutes to go. When members read *Hansard* tomorrow they will understand what I mean.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The Government announced how it proposed to fund the southern railway. The Premier claimed, to the people of Western Australia, that it would be funded by the sale of AlintaGas. The Government is now running 100 miles an hour from that commitment, presumably because of the onslaught of attacks from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia, which has said that those funds should be used exclusively for the retirement of debt. The Government's friends in the CCI have said that it is unacceptable for public transport to be a priority in the sale of public assets and it is a bad use of funds flowing from the privatisation strategies of this Government.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.