

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 3 June 1987

THE SPEAKER (Mr Barnett) took the Chair at 2.15 pm, and read prayers.

DAILY "HANSARD"

Production: Statement by Speaker

THE SPEAKER: I wish to inform members of developments in the Hansard office. Members will be aware that in the last 12 months sophisticated computer equipment has been installed in the Parliament with a view to modernising the printing of *Hansard*, and making substantial savings in printing costs. I also hope to introduce a printed daily *Hansard* in due course.

The technical aspects of this project are currently under review to determine the most efficient way to proceed in the future. However, sufficient progress has been made to enable the printing of an experimental daily *Hansard*, which has been distributed today. This document was printed by the State Printing Division from camera-ready copy prepared in the Hansard office using a modern laser printer.

Various problems are yet to be overcome and it is unlikely that it will be possible to continue to produce the daily *Hansard* for the remainder of this sitting. However, I am hopeful of introducing it as a regular service to the Parliament before the end of the year.

I also take this opportunity to congratulate all members of the Hansard staff, who have worked extremely hard to overcome all of the problems associated with producing this inaugural copy of the daily *Hansard*. I particularly mention our computer expert, Morris Davids, and the enormous amount of time he has put into getting the daily *Hansard* to this stage. Between now and when we finally produce a daily *Hansard*, I would appreciate any comments from members on how they feel about it and on any improvements that they feel can be made.

RAILWAY CROSSING

Walkaway: Petition

MR TUBBY (Greenough) [2.20 pm]: I have a petition from the residents of Walkaway in the Greenough Shire which reads as follows—

To the Honourable the Speaker and Honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled.

We, the undersigned, being citizens of Walkaway are extremely concerned, and have been since the inception of flashing lights at the Railway Crossing in our town, with excessive speeds at which the trains travel through the township.

It is our request that all train traffic be reduced to 20 kms an hour through our town area as visibility on either side of the crossing is partially obscured by the Railway Station Museum and the General Store, blocking vision on both sides of the crossing.

The petition bears 74 signatures. I certify that it conforms to the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly.

The SPEAKER: I direct that the petition be brought to the Table of the House.

(See petition No. 39.)

BILLS (4): INTRODUCTION AND FIRST READING

1. Iron Ore (Hamersley Range) Agreement Amendment Bill.
2. Iron Ore (Mount Bruce) Agreement Amendment Bill.
3. Metropolitan Market Amendment Bill.
Bills introduced, on motions by Mr Parker (Minister for Minerals and Energy), and read a first time.
4. Petroleum Retailers Rights and Liabilities Amendment Bill.

Bill introduced, on motion by Mr Stephens, and read a first time.

DECLARATIONS AND ATTESTATIONS AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 20 May.

MR MENSAROS (Floreat) [2.28 pm]: In most cases where a qualified witness is required to witness a signature or attest a statutory declaration, under the existing law it can be witnessed by anyone from a group of people all of whom, it is important to know, are either

public servants or akin to their occupation—town or shire clerks, electoral registrars, postmasters, public servants generally, teachers, police officers, and members of Parliament. Commissioners for declarations, who are appointed by the Attorney General, also are able to witness signatures or attest statutory declarations.

It is well known that in Western Australia justices of the peace are appointed in accordance with the Justices Act. The appointment of a justice of the peace is a fairly cumbersome procedure, and the number of them is limited. Commissioners for declarations are appointed virtually on their application, subject to the necessary screening of the applicant to ensure that he has not had any convictions and is of good character. In other words, he must be a normal and upstanding citizen. Almost every application received for a commissioner for declarations has been approved.

I suppose that all members have experienced that for some incomprehensible reason the appointment of a commissioner for declarations in recent years takes between nine and 12 months. I do not think that is warranted. There is no indication that more applications have been received than were received in the past, and neither has the Attorney General's staff—the staff who deal with such applications—been reduced.

The Bill before the House contains two main provisions. Firstly, it extends the group of ex officio people who can sign documents by way of statutory declarations and witnessing signatures. It is interesting to note that the range of qualified witnesses proposed by this Bill will be remarkably different from the existing range of witnesses. The ex officio qualified witnesses will include shire or city councillors, bank managers, building society managers, union secretaries, legal practitioners, medical practitioners, pharmacists, members of the academic staff of an institution providing courses at post-secondary education level, real estate agents, settlement agents, and, as a result of an amendment to the Bill in the Legislative Council, insurance brokers.

The other provision in the Bill is simply an insertion in connection with the appointment of commissioners for declarations which states that the Attorney General may appoint a commissioner for declarations if he considers there is a special need to do so.

Basically the Bill is not concerned with political philosophy; it is rather an everyday practicality, where the question is whether the new provisions improve the situation or act in a detrimental way.

One could have the view, and I personally maintain, that at least for part of their function commissioners for declarations are almost superfluous. Their appointment is generally archaic, as is the appointment of justices of the peace, because they were originally appointed under the Declarations and Attestations Act early in our development when there were very few people in Western Australia. These people elected members of Parliament and they were known by virtually everyone; each member knew his constituents and it was logical that members should recommend the appointment of commissioners for declarations and justices of the peace. We are well past that stage and no member in the metropolitan area could know each of his approximately 20 000 constituents, or even country members know each of their eight or 10 000 constituents.

These appointments would be more effectively made through local government, which is the lowest strata of government and is definitely closer to the people.

It could also be argued that one could differentiate between the functions of commissioners for declarations under the Declarations and Attestations Act—that is, between witnessing a signature where the only function of the person doing so, either ex officio or as a commissioner for declarations, is to verify that the person who is the signatory to the document has signed it, and when the commissioner for declarations or the ex officio person has to be satisfied that the contents of the declaration signed by the person making the statutory declaration are the truth in the perception of the signatory.

In the first category we might as well do away with the need for a qualified witness. Land title documents had to be religiously witnessed by a qualified witness until 10 or 12 years ago; however, that requirement was removed and there has obviously been no detrimental effect. In other words, for the last decade or so, witnesses to the documents involved in transfers of land had simply to be adult citizens.

This provision is not very far from the recommendation of the Western Australian Law Reform Commission, which reported on official attestation of forms and documents. In clause 1.15, the commission recommended that the Act be amended to provide for unattested

statutory declarations. In other words, it recommended that statutory declarations could be made out and signed by the person without the need for the document to be witnessed. The only difference between a normal piece of paper signed by that person and the unattested statutory declaration would be that the criminal consequences would prevail in the same way; in other words, if the person made an untrue statement in an unattested declaration, he would be subject to the same penalty that would apply when making an untrue statement in an attested statutory declaration as we know it today.

The Law Reform Commission argued that, if such a provision were introduced, it was highly unlikely that this would induce more people to make false declarations, because they would be subject to the same penalty. Also, the penalty does not relate to the person who has witnessed that statutory declaration but to the person making the statement. There is a great deal of logic in the Law Reform Commission's recommendation.

The Law Reform Commission also recommended that this and other provisions should be uniform throughout the Commonwealth of Australia. I do not think that detracts from the merit of this recommendation. I recently asked the Attorney General why he had not considered accepting the recommendation and he said, among other things, that it was meant to be part of a uniform agreement but that other States had not accepted the recommendation. That in itself makes no difference, and the recommendation perhaps should still have been accepted or considered for acceptance.

Of course, that uniformity could be a disadvantage, as we well know. If it were to be implemented by minor legislation or some other arrangement, sooner or later we could find that the Commonwealth would want to get into that area, pre-empt the States' authority, and take over the situation for itself. We experience this presently with the Australian National Companies and Securities Commission scheme. Such intervention will prevent the States from dealing with their own affairs even on a normal consensus basis with other States and the Commonwealth Government.

The proposed provisions will add a large number of people in various groups to the ex officio persons who can act as qualified witnesses. Of course, this proposition could be extended to cover a bigger field because once certain groups of people are allowed into what-

ever activity, immediately many other groups of people query why they have not been included. The truth of this was demonstrated during the debate on the Bill in the Legislative Council when already an organisation of accountants complained that its members were not included. The Attorney General's solution was to extend the provisions to include people registered as auditors.

One could immediately name many other people who could be included. What about ministers of religion? It is not uncommon for people to turn to such ministers, who have a respected position in the community. What about accountants, or sworn valuers, who again are in communication with people, particularly in the country? If we include medical practitioners and pharmacists, why not include dentists? I am sure they do not want to be considered as being on a lower level than pharmacists.

One could also argue the case for bank officers, in addition to bank managers, particularly in today's organisation of retail banking. I can remember, and I am sure other members can remember, that 20 or 30 years ago when a person went into a bank the manager not only greeted him by name but also knew how much money he had in his account. However, today the banks have human machines sitting behind teller boxes who do not know the customer's name or how much money he has in the bank. When a person wants a certain amount of money in cash, the teller uses the computer to ascertain if the customer has any credit. Therefore, what about including bank officers, who have far more to do with the public than does the bank manager? What about law clerks, who in many legal offices have more to do with the public?

We could be talking about ordinary shopkeepers. In small country towns we could consider people like motel owners and various other people. I have no doubt that when the provisions of this Bill become more known and publicised approaches will be made to the Attorney General regarding the groups of people who have been omitted.

Proceeding a step further, I wonder whether the Attorney General has considered the following aspect which could be criticised: The present ex officio witnesses are all Government appointees—local, State, or Federal—other than elected members of Parliament. When appointed they must have undergone some scrutiny as far as their characters, their criminal records, and so on are concerned. When

they were included in the *ex officio* group, these people had already undergone scrutiny. The group to which this right is to be extended includes private employees or self-employed persons. There is no criticism of that, but no doubt these people have not undergone any scrutiny.

This legislation might well encompass people with a criminal record. They will become able to witness documents and sign statutory declarations. A real estate agent or an insurance broker might well have been involved on a personal basis in some of these transactions. These are the weaknesses in extending the *ex officio* entitlement to these specified groups.

The next provision is dangerous. It opens the door for a perception at least of cronyism, favouritism, or patronage—call it what we like. These accusations could be made by people who are not appointed on their applications, as opposed to those who are, because the new provision in the legislation is that the Attorney General may appoint a person if he considers there is a special need. There is no interpretation of what constitutes a special need. It is unlikely that the Attorney General, when making his appointment or denying it, will go into an explanation of why he considers there is a special need.

I can envisage his routine letters to members of Parliament thanking them for their applications, but saying, "As you know, the Act provides that only in cases where there is a special need will people be appointed. In the case of your applicant there was no special need, therefore he could not be appointed." I bet anything he would not explain to the member there was no special need because of this, that, or the other. This gives a tremendously wide discretionary power to the Attorney General.

It may be argued that the present powers also give the same sort of discretion to him, because he may appoint people to be commissioners for declarations. This however must be taken with the prevailing practice. Experience shows that every applicant with no conviction behind him—someone with a normal character—is appointed. This is unlike the position with justices of the peace. That has been the practice, as far as I can ascertain, since 1913, when the parent Act became operative.

This Bill is open to very serious criticism. I wonder whether it is not the Attorney General's dislike of the appointment procedure which is the reason, but his appointments take an enormously long time. On no occasion can I

recall a wait of more than three months prior to appointments being made by Hon. Joe Berinson. Invariably it now takes nine to 12 months. One does not want to be discourteous to the Attorney General; therefore one is hard put to explain to a constituent why his application is taking so long, particularly when he knows his neighbour or his friend who applied four years ago had a reply within two months. The Attorney General will be put in an invidious position because people will argue and write back asking for explanations of why they were not appointed.

I think I have covered the provisions more or less. This is not the type of legislation which the Opposition would oppose, because that would be an obstructionist attitude, but it is appropriate to make these critical remarks. The Bill has been passed by the Legislative Council, and there is no doubt it will pass in this place, particularly because we will not oppose it in any case. I hope my comments will be taken into consideration, and we will watch the progress of the legislation to see whether I was being too pessimistic, or whether I will be proved right and some further amendments will be required from time to time.

The Opposition does not oppose the Bill.

MR TRENORDEN (Avon) [2.48 pm]: The National Party supports this Bill, although we recognise that there will be a downgrading of the position of commissioner for declarations, because the procedure in the past has been to appoint any person applying. We also concede that the costs of administration and the practicalities of 1987 outweigh those considerations.

We have a number of concerns about the Bill. Looking through the list of people now able to perform the duties done in the past by a commissioner for declarations—the ability to sign papers and so on—we find it includes town clerks, members of councils, electoral registrars—there would not be many of them in the country—and people in charge of post offices—and post offices are being reduced in the country. It is not hard to understand that in most of our electorates people may be a considerable distance from a person able to sign or witness a form.

Accountants are not included on this list. I ask the Minister responsible for the Bill in this House to indicate whether there is any reason why they should not be included, because legal and medical practitioners and pharmacists are

included. Accountants should be on the list, so perhaps there is some reason why they are not. Perhaps they are covered in some other area.

One classification of persons the National Party is concerned about and believes should definitely be included in the Bill is the branch managers of pastoral houses in rural towns. These people act similarly to bank managers in that they hand out money; they do leases; they do bills of sale and myriad other financial transactions which require that they have the ability to witness signatures. I ask the Minister to take on board the fact that branch managers of pastoral houses need to be on those lists for the sake of being able to do their job properly.

The National Party also notes that, under the Bill, commissioners for declarations could be appointed under special circumstances, and I believe that in rural areas in particular there will be special circumstances. We take it that the position of commissioner of declarations will not be hard to fill, but we hope the Government recognises that this Bill will not cover all areas.

In summary, the major concern of the National Party is that there are two groups of people who are not listed in the Act: The accountants, and the branch managers of pastoral houses, who we say should come into the same category as bank, credit union or building society managers.

MR PETER DOWDING (Maylands—Minister for Works and Services) [2.54 pm]: I thank the member for his support of this legislation, and I will draw to the attention of the Attorney General the matters that have been raised in connection with it. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Third Reading

Leave granted to proceed forthwith to the third reading.

Bill read a third time, on motion by Mr Peter Dowding (Minister for Works and Services), and passed.

GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 21 May.

MR BLAIKIE (Vasse) [2.57 pm]: I say from the outset that the Opposition intends to support this legislation as it can see wide benefits resulting from it to the community of Western Australia. We wish to make some comments on what the Government is proposing, also recognising what has transpired to bring this Bill before the House today.

In 1971 I attended a function at which John Tonkin officiated, and that was the centenary celebration of the first railway in Western Australia, a railway line between Claymore and Wonerup which carried timber to the port of Wonerup. It was quite an occasion to think back in history to that time. So while John Tonkin officiated at that celebration, his successors in this House are now officiating at further closures of what has been an important part of the history of this State.

I have no doubt that in the last 100-odd years many members of Parliament have been prevailed upon to ensure adequate railway systems in their respective parts of the State, recognising that the State is an important developing area. The group settlement era was again one that saw the advent of many miles of railway line throughout the State, which was part of the development of that particular era. One hears stories of the various goods that were carried, and the railways were important for passenger transport, for communications, and for the provision of mail services. The train service also provided for the transport of cream, an industry with which I am familiar. One can go back 50 years and imagine what sort of state the cream would be in when it had travelled from outlying areas back to, say, the factory located at Spearwood. The train transport system was thus very important.

During the 1960s and 1970s, different demands were placed on the members of Parliament, and I am aware of those. There was the demand for improved transport, improved transport opportunities, and better transport systems. Of course, by that time there was a demand placed on successive Governments to deregulate transport away from rail so that the system would give the users of transport services the right of choice to determine the most satisfactory method of transporting their various goods.

As part of the history with which one becomes involved in this place, I saw the commencement of the SWAT study—the South Western Australia Transport Study—which led to what I regard as almost the total deregulation of transport services in the south west. That deregulation, has caused a large amount of goods to be no longer transported by rail, but has allowed the carriage of those goods to flow on to other modes of transport. The result is this Bill coming before the House.

I pay a special tribute to the member for Dale, Cyril Rushton, for his work as Minister for Transport in the early stages of the implementation of the SWATS system. Unfortunately the member is not in the House today. Despite the difficulties he faced on a personal basis, on one hand, in directing Westrail out of the various modes of transport; and on the other hand, as a member of Parliament, advising the respective communities that they would be better off under a deregulated transport system, I believe Cyril Rushton has done the State a great service. He was able to ensure that Westrail operated in the areas of transport in which it was more profitable.

Mr Troy: You would have to admit the real action started with my predecessor.

Mr BLAIKIE: Who was that?

Mr Troy: The Minister for The South West.

Mr BLAIKIE: I advise the Minister that the deregulation started with the SWAT study which was initiated by the then Minister for Transport, Ray O'Connor, but it was implemented by Cyril Rushton. I am talking about the South Western Australia Transport Study, which related to the transport of goods and services. If the Minister wishes to talk about passenger transport services I would be delighted to accommodate him.

I conclude this section of my address by saying that the predictions and undertakings of Cyril Rushton have come true. I place on record the fact that significant cost-benefits have accrued to the communities concerned. Transport is much cheaper—in many instances it is half the cost; there is a far better and more efficient service; many of the transport industries now servicing the areas concerned are local transport industries; and the community has an exceptionally wide choice of operators. Instead of being locked in and obliged to use the services of Westrail the consumer has a freedom of choice and the opportunity to consider a range of price modes.

On the other hand, I believe Westrail is probably operating more efficiently today in the areas where it can best compete than it did when it was trying to operate on the branch lines carry all goods delivered. Its previous diverse operations were proving an impediment to the development of the areas concerned while not benefiting Westrail to any significant degree. In fact, I believe they were detrimental to the operation of Westrail.

I will give two examples of that, again from my own area. One example relates to timber transport. Timber was regulated and had to be carried by rail. At the Witchcliffe timber mill, some 10 to 15 kilometres south of Busselton—or for that matter at any other timber mill in the area—timber would be loaded onto a truck at the mill, transported to the Busselton railway, off-loaded from the truck onto a railway vehicle, railed to Perth, then off-loaded onto a road truck and taken to its final destination. It was not the cost of transport that made Westrail uncompetitive; the cost of handling was killing the local operators in retaining sales in the marketplace. If we apply that to potatoes or to any other goods or services we can see that double handling was an impediment to local communities. Nowadays goods, whether they be potatoes or anything else, are loaded onto a vehicle on the farm and delivered direct to the destination; it is a door-to-door road transport service.

Another very significant growth area is courier transport, and we have seen the emergence of small parcel operators in the south west. The provision of that service previously cost Westrail an arm and a leg, but now that Westrail has stopped that service several small operators are providing an excellent service. They travel throughout the south west—between Northcliffe, Pemberton, Manjimup, Margaret River, Busselton, and other areas nearby. It is not unusual to have courier services operating three or four times a day, for different purposes, by different people, to and from the city. Again I pay tribute to the work and initiative of Cyril Rushton in this regard, as the whole community is reaping the benefits.

In February 1985 a report was issued by the research section of the Transport Commission which confirms what I have just said. The submission assumed that the Busselton-Capel railway line would generate annually some 19 700 tonnes of traffic. The report assumed that, as a result of deregulation from rail traffic to road traffic, the total tonnage would drop to some 8 500 tonnes. In fact, the report indicates that

some 18 months later the actual tonnage carried over that line was 1 000 tonnes per annum. The deregulation obviously provided an opportunity for those people using the line to choose the mode of transport they preferred, and it is quite evident they chose other than rail; hence the legislation before the House.

A survey was conducted by the Director General of Transport, and I am very pleased to say that I took the initiative to write to the Minister at the time to express my concern at the closure of this line. I pointed out that, because Westrail was no longer using the line, it was very important that the line area remained and that the rail line not be removed, at least until a survey had been done of the area to see whether there could be any alternative usage besides the use indicated by Westrail. The reason I became involved in this matter is that I had already seen what had happened in relation to previous rail closures, in particular the railway line between Busselton and Augusta.

The Government of the day, having closed the line, within a very short time had the track and all the lines ripped up and salvaged. Over subsequent years, farmers on adjoining land, rightly or wrongly, used part of the land.

If ever there was a need to use that track, the cost of re-laying it would make it absolutely out of the question. So it was with a sense of urgency that I urged the Government not to have that track removed. I am very pleased that the Government has ensured that the tracks on the line in question—Capel-Wonnerup, Wonnerup-Busselton, Wonnerup-Nannup, Pemberton-Northcliffe, and the alumina station line to Dwellingup—have remained. That is the reason for the Bill before the House.

Mr Troy: What remains does not have zero value.

Mr BLAIKIE: No, the salvage value of the rails and sleepers in situ, reject or otherwise, is significant. I am not sure exactly what is the value, but I assume it would run into literally hundreds of thousands of dollars. However, it is important that the Government has seen fit to ensure that the track and the rails will remain. I am quite confident that a positive use will be found for them, and I compliment the Government on the decisions it has made to date.

I made a submission to the inquiry of the Transport Commission to the effect that I viewed it as being imperative that the track remain. I also pointed out that the Government should seek to find an entrepreneur to run the

line as a tourist operation. I have great enthusiasm for the voluntary local organisations, but I believe that if an entrepreneur were to be found and a satisfactory form of reasonable tenure of the closed railway line worked out, this would advantage the district quite substantially. I also mentioned in my submission that I believed Westrail would need to be out of the management altogether, although certain safety factors would need to be built in to such an arrangement.

More importantly, a tourist operator could not be controlled by the dictates which control Westrail in respect of the employment and wages of personnel. This suggestion is not viable at the moment, but I am optimistic that further down the line it may well be possible, particularly when one considers the successful entrepreneurs who operate across Australia and Western Australia—whether they have a particular interest in horses, yachts or wineries.

I have little doubt that if someone could be induced to operate the line, he would make a success of it. It would certainly give that person the pleasure of achievement and it would be of great benefit to the development of the tourist industry of the south west region.

When the inquiry from the Transport Commission went to the south west area, it met with a number of people. I am quite concerned that the inquiry did not meet with or receive a submission—although submissions were sent to the Minister for The South West's office, and were not acknowledged—from the Busselton Rail Preservation Society. This group is interested in trying to preserve the railway which services that community. The Busselton Rail Preservation Society was very involved in assisting the community in saving the old Busselton railway station, which was built 70 or 80 years ago. They were trying to ensure that the old station would be saved and moved to another part of the town, to Rotary Park, where it could be restored as a tourist attraction and as an indicator of the historical merits of that railway station.

In this regard, I take the opportunity to relate to the House and to the Minister for Transport some of the frustrations experienced by the local community. I have a letter dated 18 December 1985 which was sent to Westrail by the Busselton Tourist Bureau. In that letter the tourist bureau sought the advice and help of Westrail in respect of the old railway station, wherein it said it was interested in moving it and having a lease over the land involved. The

tourist bureau has yet to receive a reply, despite numerous telephone communications, requests and a number of—

Mr Troy: I don't think that is completely true. There has been communication between Westrail and the local authority which is acting on behalf of the tourist body. Don't imply that there has been no communication, because there has been.

Mr BLAIKIE: There has been no communication with the tourist bureau.

Mr Troy: The local authority was acting on behalf of the tourist bureau.

Mr BLAIKIE: I can assure the Minister that there has been a breakdown in communication right the way through.

However, in shifting the railway line, the community is also seeking financial assistance. I think the total cost will be something like \$30 000 or \$40 000, and the community will request from the Government financial assistance of \$20 000 to facilitate this restructuring process. This matter has already been broached by the local authorities and organisations involved. I am simply putting this on the record so that the Minister can acknowledge it in his reply.

I have already indicated that the Capel-Wonnerup, Wonnerup-Busselton, Wonnerup-Nannup, and Pemberton-Northcliffe lines, and the alumina line to Dwellingup, will be retained. The Opposition supports that move.

I now pay a special tribute to the Hotham Valley group, which I believe runs a very efficient and positive operation. It is interesting to note that the Hotham Valley group was formed in 1974 and has a membership of 250. It is also interesting to note that it has an annual patronage of 33 000 people and has assets valued at about \$5 million. It is commendable that the Government is trying to ensure that the alumina-Dwellingup section virtually becomes the province of the Hotham Valley group. That organisation certainly has shown its capacity to manage a railway system for the benefit of not only its own members but also the State.

Mr D. L. Smith: I hope you extend that appreciation to the Leschenault Railway Preservation Society?

Mr BLAIKIE: The Leschenault Railway Preservation Society has had some assistance from the Government.

Mr D. L. Smith: It has also done some very substantial work on its own account.

Mr BLAIKIE: That is right, but it has been assisted by the Government. I do not believe that one can lump the two organisations together, although I hope that the Leschenault Railway Preservation Society will be as successful as the Hotham Valley group.

Mr D. L. Smith: I am sure it will be.

Mr BLAIKIE: Its headquarters is based in Boyanup, which is in the member for Mitchell's electorate. They have a museum project which was funded to \$50 000 by the Tourist Commission; they also received a Commonwealth Employment Grant of \$300 000. That group has some 35 members.

I asked the Minister a question last week as to whether any of the lines had been leased, and I have not yet had a response, but I understand Mr Goss of the Leschenault Railway Preservation Society—

Mr Troy: What was my response?

Mr BLAIKIE: It was that I should ask the Minister for The South West.

Mr Troy: He is handling the tenders. You have a response from me.

Mr BLAIKIE: I have had a response from the Minister for Transport suggesting I ask the Minister for The South West, and he is still replying.

Mr Troy: The advertisements clearly drew attention to the fact that they were handling the tendering process.

Mr BLAIKIE: I have had a response, but I have not had a reply. My understanding is that a Mr Goss has been issued with the lease of the railway line. Perhaps the Minister could indicate whether that is correct.

Mr Troy: I am not aware of the leasing details.

Mr BLAIKIE: What needs to be cleared up is that while the Busselton community is making certain improvements within its own province to readjust railway lines and relocate old railway stations, Mr Goss's lease should not impinge on that community's endeavours. I hope the Leschenault Railway Preservation Society operates a very successful line and is able to do so with the communities which will want to be part of a growing tourist operation on these railway lines of the south west. I hope it can be as successful as the Hotham Valley group.

This is historic legislation. I hope it proves to be a new direction for the tourism industry in Western Australia. It is important that the Government nurture rather than overly regulate these new tourist ventures. We will want to

see how the Government proceeds in that respect, but the general thrust of the legislation is supported.

MR TRENORDEN (Avon) [3.22 pm]: The National Party supports this Bill.

Private railway organisations will be a key to much tourist activity in this State in the future. That activity will be enjoyed particularly by Western Australians—people from the metropolitan and country areas travelling up and down the old historic railway lines which have been laid for many years. Many of these lines run through some beautiful locations, and give metropolitan people the opportunity to get out of the cesspool of Perth and into the country and see trees, birds, grass, and the way life is meant to be. We support the Government's move to allow that to happen.

Talking about beautiful trips and the magic of rail, train travel has captured the hearts and souls of people throughout the world since the time that the *Rocket* made its first run in England last century. Steam in particular captures the hearts of people, and the thought of steam trains running through the Western Australian countryside, particularly from July to October, brings joy to my heart and to a lot of people in this Chamber, and to many other Western Australians. I will be one of the people going on these train trips in the future.

Some of the standard trips also are excellent. I refer to the train which travels from Perth to Northam and beyond—the *Prospector*—which provides one of the world's first-class railway trips. The scenery along the Avon River and through the broken hills to the east of Perth is something to see. I am reminded that the trip to Merredin should also be taken.

Lines have been closed for economic reasons, and it is only logical and sensible to open them for private entrepreneurs and organisations to run. The Hotham Valley Tourist Railway regularly runs trips in my electorate in the Avon Valley, and these trips are excellent. Some of these trains carry thousands of people.

If I can inject a negative note, the Government and Westrail have not been much help to these people in the past, and I hope this Bill is a sign of better things to come. Private operators have had to man these trains according to the demands of the unions and the costs put on them by Westrail. The work practices of the unions have not helped the operators in the past, but I hope that is in the past. Westrail

charged the Hotham Valley Tourist Railway \$220 000 in 1985, and I presume the 1986 figure will be over \$250 000.

Mr Troy: When did you speak to them last, because your comments indicate you may be eight months out of date?

Mr TRENORDEN: I said I hoped all these things were in the past.

Strikes have also affected the operation of these lines in the past and caused losses in terms of ticket sales and doubts among people wanting to go on trips. I hope these things will be looked at and acted on by future Governments because the trips and railway lines will be used by thousands of Western Australians and overseas tourists to go around our State and look at our treasures.

Questions have to be raised about the future of the lines in relation to problems of maintenance, safety, and public liability, and these will have to be worked out so that they do not kill the enterprise of people wishing to operate private railways.

The member for Vasse talked about historical societies and organisations involved in railways throughout the State; and members will find dozens of railway museums run by people with a great interest in rail travel. My contact with the people involved has revealed that many of them have backgrounds in accountancy or legal practice; not all of them come from Westrail. They are the people who put the heart and soul into these organisations.

The town of Northam, for example, has a history of rail. I believe at one stage it had more Westrail employees than any other town, including the metropolitan area. The old railway station saw tens of thousands of soldiers move through it during the periods of the two World Wars, and there is a lot of history and heart-break associated with the platforms of that station. Many people left from there and never came back and many people saw friends and loved ones depart never to return.

The National Party supports the thrust of this Bill and commends any effort to get these trains moving, particularly the steam trains, which are able to capture the railway history of our State and allow people to get into the countryside and see what life is really about. We will support any future moves in that direction.

MR TROY (Mundaring—Minister for Transport) [3.29 pm]: I am very pleased to acknowledge the Opposition's support of the Bill. It has recognised the Government's intent to

ensure that part of our heritage is not lost when there is a tourism market which will ensure the continuance of some form of rail operation in this State.

In the enthusiasm displayed on the other side of the House, we must recognise clearly that there are only so many tourist railways which can be supported by the population of this State and people from overseas. Hotham Valley has been launched as a very successful operation, and the Leschenault group has put in very significant efforts which remind one of the Hotham Valley operation at a similar stage of its growth. Other operators I understand have expressed some interest in particular in the Pemberton-Northcliffe rail link.

The member for Vasse raised matters not directly associated with this Bill, and I will deal with them at a later time. He spoke about general improvements to Westrail and, in particular, the mode of bulk transport it is providing. I will not linger on those points except to say that the principal thrust of our initiatives has been to work closely with all of the parties involved in rail to achieve a benefit for this State.

The lines to be closed and mentioned in my second reading speech could be advantageous to tourism. Pemberton is a particularly magnificent part of the State and would be lost as a tourist attraction if action were not taken along the lines proposed in the Bill. I believe we must move quickly to ensure that the lines which are to be closed do not decay to a state beyond repair. This legislation has been modelled along the lines of the Victorian legislation and will allow us to move quickly.

The closure of railways in this State is a long and drawn out process requiring inquiries and procedures spread over a long time.

Mr BLAICKIE: Can you imagine how long it took our founding fathers to put the railways there?

Mr TROY: I am not sure the initiative to put them there took longer than the initiative to close them.

The Bill allows for an Order-in-Council to be issued to ensure that tourist markets are captured and to allow for rail enthusiasts to pursue their interests for years to come.

The member for Avon referred to the Hotham Valley Tourist Railway. I agree wholeheartedly with his comments about how effective that group has been. It has done a tremendous job for tourism, and the Government has supported it in every way possible. We acknowledged some of the group's difficult-

ies in recent negotiations, and we have linked that acknowledgement with a practical package to ensure the railway's continuation with a degree of viability while recognising the very stringent requirement for Westrail to continue to be commercial. For example, the value of the rail and sleepers involved in these decisions has not been fully realised. However, it is extremely significant to consider the overall asset their retention offers this State in other forms.

The Government made the decision to retain the railways as a tourist attraction as an investment for the State.

Mr BLAICKIE: Has the Government attempted to obtain the cooperation of the Department of Conservation and Land Management or any other Government agency to check on those lines to ensure that people do not steal part of them? I believe it is important that the Government should ensure that they are checked from time to time.

Mr TROY: Westrail monitors lines under its control most effectively. This proposal transfers lines that are currently Westrail's responsibility by an Order-in-Council. Their security, therefore, would be ensured with the new operator. Perhaps I do not see that as being as big a danger as does the member for Vasse. Apart from the odd sleeper being used as firewood, there is a limited market for railway lines and sleepers in a high volume order that cannot readily be detected.

Quite clearly, this legislation will allow the Government to move in a positive way and with some degree of freedom outside the previous controls associated with the closure of the lines. I am sure the tourism industry will be enhanced by this proposal. Entrepreneurs will also appreciate the relaxation of provisions included in this legislation.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee

The Chairman of Committees (Mr Burkett) in the Chair; Mr Troy (Minister for Transport) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 7 put and passed.

Clause 8: Sections 66A and 66B inserted—

Mr BLAICKIE: I believe that it is essential that these railway reserves continue to be under the control of the State because, at some time in the future, the Government may need to re-

establish a transport system in those areas. Westrail may, in the future, find it necessary to use those lines.

While this clause states that the order will remain an order only for as long as the Government wishes, I want the Government to ensure that it can again use the line at some later stage, subject to the contractual arrangements into which it may have entered.

It is very important that while tourist operators lease the line, the Government retains control of it. The opportunity may arise in the future for Westrail to cater for tourist traffic again. I will give an example of this. Should the Government's new rail service between Perth and Bunbury prove to be successful, it may follow that, with the development of Bunbury, Busselton, or Manjimup, it may be viable, in due course, to have an extension of that service. While I support the Government's endeavours, I believe that it should at all times retain the ownership of the land and the line so that if it requires them in the future they will be available. I ask the Minister for Transport to give the Chamber a categorical assurance that that will be the case.

Mr TROY: A categorical assurance, as requested by the member for Vasse, is somewhat difficult to provide, but I am sympathetic to the position he has put forward.

If members examine the situation of railway operators around the world today they will realise that a different set of circumstances exists today from that existing 10 years ago. Unquestionably, there have been technical breakthroughs which have changed the future of the railway system.

The Government currently recognises that the asset of the railway line is significant at this stage. However, the day will come when it will be worn out and the economies for a complete replacement of the track at that time will determine what the market can support. At this stage we can take advantage of a residual asset which is available for commercial activity for many years to come. The day will come, perhaps after 20 years of successful operation in the south west, when the Government will have to make a decision about the replacement of the track and bridges. It will have to make a judgment at that time.

My reply may be disappointing to the member for Vasse, but, as I said, I am sympathetic to his view. Before the Government gives away

an asset of this kind it would be extremely cautious, bearing in mind the points he has raised.

Mr Blaikie: How many people have shown an interest in operating the tourist railway?

Mr TROY: I do not know. I am not handling the tenders. That is being carried out by the South West Development Authority. I am not aware of the scope of the interest that has been shown.

Mr Blaikie: The other important tourist line is the Karri Valley line at Pemberton. The information should be supplied to members before the Bill is introduced into the other place.

Mr TROY: I cannot see any difficulty in providing the information. The information the member for Vasse has requested is not available at this stage. Following his request to me prior to the commencement of the debate this afternoon I endeavoured to obtain that information, but was not successful. When it is available I will pass it on to the member for Vasse.

Mr Blaikie: As we have a Minister for The South West, perhaps my question should be directed to him.

Mr TROY: The tenders are being handled by the South West Development Authority.

Clause put and passed.

Title put and passed.

Report

Bill reported, without amendment, and the report adopted.

Third Reading

Leave granted to proceed forthwith to the third reading.

Bill read a third time, on motion by Mr Troy (Minister for Transport), and transmitted to the Council.

SALARIES AND ALLOWANCES AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 21 May.

MR MacKINNON (Murdoch—Leader of the Opposition) [3.47 pm]: This Bill will give the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal jurisdiction to inquire into and determine the entitlements to be paid, and the benefits to be provided, to former Premiers of the State and, in fact, to former members of this House and the Legislative Council. As the Treasurer

explained in his second reading speech to the Parliament, the changes will have the advantage of achieving a degree of neutrality in the fixation of retired members' entitlements and benefits. Previously these were determined by the Government of the day.

I do not think it is proper for members of the Government to sit in judgment on these benefits, particularly in respect of members' retirement benefits and allowances. This Bill will give authority to the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal to make such decisions.

The Treasurer did consult with me—I understand he consulted also with the Leader of the National Party—in respect of retired Premiers' allowances, before this legislation was introduced into the House. I indicated to him that I had no quarrel with the changes agreed to by the Government and that I supported his suggestion that, in future, entitlements and benefits to past Premiers and past members should be set by the tribunal.

The Opposition has much pleasure in endorsing the legislation, which was introduced by the Treasurer.

MR STEPHENS (Stirling) [3.49 pm]: The National Party also supports this legislation. The Treasurer was good enough to also communicate with the Leader of the National Party in relation to benefits paid to retired Premiers. This Bill is a step in the right direction as such entitlements and benefits will not be left to the whim of the Premier of the day.

I am a little concerned about the following comment made by the Treasurer in his second reading speech—

Consistent with that principle of obtaining advice from an independent arbitral tribunal, I also asked the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal to report on and recommend additional benefits for retired members of State Parliament.

I question the suggestion that retired members should receive additional benefits.

Mr Brian Burke: It was on application for additional benefits they had made.

Mr STEPHENS: I understand that it applies not only to retired Premiers, but also to retired members of State Parliament. The recommendation in the second reading speech is that the benefit be increased.

Mr Brian Burke: They came with an application for additional benefits and I said I would not entertain that without sending it to them. It is badly phrased, but I did not recommend that to the tribunal.

Mr STEPHENS: I am glad the Treasurer has acknowledged that that is the way it reads in the second reading speech, and I thank him for clarifying that point of concern.

Any benefit which retiring members receive should be given careful consideration, particularly in these difficult times. At a time when we are asking people in the community to tighten their belts, we in Parliament should at least set an example. I would be horrified if benefits were increased.

I also bring to the attention of the Treasurer that at the moment the Salaries and Allowance Tribunal has only two members.

Mr Brian Burke: That is true.

Mr STEPHENS: Perhaps the membership should be a little broader. I do not know the background of Mr Bradshaw, and he may represent the people's interests; but one member of the tribunal should represent the interests of the community rather than the interests of politicians.

Mr Brian Burke: Mr Bradshaw is an accountant. We are in the process of putting a third person onto the tribunal. Generally there has been an independent chairman—that was Mr Townsend until former Senator Willesee was appointed. We have usually had a lawyer and an accountant on the tribunal.

Mr STEPHENS: The public would feel that their interests were being looked after if they had a representative on the tribunal.

The National Party supports the legislation.

MR BRIAN BURKE (Balga—Treasurer) [3.52 pm]: I thank the Opposition and the deputy leader of the National Party for their general support of the Bill. Quite unashamedly this is an attempt by the Government to distance itself from the process by which it makes decisions about the benefits to which retiring members and Premiers—I hoped to move an amendment to include former Ministers—are entitled once they become former occupiers of their position.

Without removing the Government from the scene of the decision making, what happens is that, firstly, very little change is made to the benefits that people receive and any change that does occur is usually haphazard and inconsistent. This was brought home to me when the

late Hon. A. R. G. Hawke died in South Australia and I was asked a series of questions about the cost of the funeral, the entitlement he had to a telephone, and assistance in a number of other areas. These benefits varied according to the position of the Government of the day, and the Premier of the day, but varied also as to the location of the former Premier and, in some situations, his circumstances. For example, one former Premier was given an ex gratia payment because his circumstances were more difficult than the Government of the day thought they should be. In other circumstances, retiring Premiers were given certain benefits that had not been extended to their predecessors in that office. Very little is done, but what is done is done in an inconsistent fashion.

I thought this was an appropriate way of dealing with the matter because the Government and I would be at arm's length from any decision making. As members know, I intend to remain in this job for another 15 or 20 years, and no-one can accuse me of acting in a self-interested manner because in 15 years, with the ravages of time, particularly if John Howard gets into office, none of these benefits will be worth anything.

Mr Stephens: Do you think you will be able to stand the strain of 15 years in Opposition?

Mr BRIAN BURKE: I would be able to stand that strain too, but I was talking about the present office I occupy. I was thinking of 13 years in Government as Premier after the end of this term.

Mr Stephens: They say that hope springs eternal in the human breast; I thought that referred only to farmers, but it seems to refer to you also.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: It has been said that if one puts a beggar on the horse, he will ride it to hell. Now that I am astride this beast I do not intend to dismount.

It is a reasonable proposition to distance the Government from that process. The wording to which the deputy leader of the National Party referred was unfortunate but it was meant to convey the situation in which retired members had been for four years, through their association, putting forward propositions seeking changes and additions to the benefits they enjoy. They instanced benefits in other States and were able to demonstrate quite clearly that they received fewer benefits than did their counterparts in other States. That was referred to the tribunal, but the reference was not ac-

companied by any recommendation from me or the Government. We did not refer that recommendation but referred the matters for consideration and recommendation.

We realise more than anyone the difficulties and the stringencies of trying to balance budgets presently, but the deputy leader of the National Party takes a fairly short-sighted point of view in some ways when he considers the entitlements and the general salaries and conditions enjoyed by members of the Parliament. It is on the face of the possibility in my view that Ministers in some cases receive less than departmental heads.

Mr Mensaros: In almost every case.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: I am not sure that it is every case, but if it is in every case, I do not retreat from the point of view. It affects the Opposition side of politics more than it affects the Labor Party. I do not know whether members opposite will accept this point, but I think it is true: There is about Labor Party politics a whiff of vocation. It is less the case these days than previously, but I can remember my father telling me about what he thought politics involved, why people should involve themselves in politics, and about the development of a notion of public service, etc. All of those altruisms may well have got lost in the transformation to practical participation; but there is no doubt that in Labor Party politics there is some hint of a vocation, and some ideological or philosophical base.

That is much less the case about the conservative side of politics. If elected representatives on the Opposition side of politics were asked who John Stuart Mill was, not many would know who he was or have any idea of the fundamental principles of liberalism. I do not mean to be personal or critical, because it is not necessarily a weakness and may well be a strength. The fundamental principles of liberalism seem to have got lost and are not generally known to members of the conservative parties.

A big debate is presently proceeding within the conservative parties as to what the true principles of liberalism, as reflected in the political party called the Liberal Party, actually are. What happens is that the position of parliamentarians depreciates within the community and fewer people of excellent calibre are attracted into the conservative parties' ranks. Members opposite may disagree with that.

Mr Mensaros: It is absolutely true.

Mr Stephens: You are implying that is a result of the remuneration.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: It is partly that, but it is also as a result of the way people view politicians and where they rank them with regard to status.

When my dad was a member of Parliament, members were much more highly regarded. The point I am making is that the conservative side of politics has suffered more than has the Labor Party's side. That is why members opposite can never understand why union officers sometimes receive only tradesmen's wages. They obviously have a great deal of ability and could earn much more outside. If they were in the private enterprise world, they would be very senior and successful business people. Instead they put up with the strictures and straitened circumstances of union office. I could not imagine anything worse than dealing with a varied and often dissatisfied membership. The reason they put up with that sort of circumstance is that they have some sort of vocation.

Members opposite are a bit short-sighted when they present the point of view they have about the way in which politicians should be dealt with in a financial sense, or as regards conditions of service.

Mr Mensaros: I fully agree, but I have always said they should be paid either very much more, or nothing at all.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: I agree with the member absolutely. Considering those two options, the problem with the second proposition—paying them nothing—is that I could not be a member of Parliament if I were paid nothing, unless there was some central fund, or the party paid members. The member might be able to be a member of Parliament and not be paid; I do not know his circumstances.

Mr Mensaros: In America there used to be provision for an Executive member, like MacNamara from the Ford Company and Hewitson from General Motors.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: In this place we are legislators. I am talking about the terms and conditions of politicians and legislators. The member is talking about the Executive arm of Government. The situation is different. I suppose one could talk about the Governor in our situation.

Mr Mensaros: Ministers of the Crown.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: They happen to be legislators as well. Members of the Senate and the Congress in the United States are paid.

I do not disagree with the logic of what the member has to say; it is undeniable. Sometimes we are tempted to gain political mileage by attacking conditions and wages.

Mr Mensaros: Texan State members are not paid at all.

Mr Stephens: We have to bear our full share of any expenses in the community.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: We are not working in the lap of luxury in this place. A back-bencher receives much the same, in terms of wages, as a suburban bank manager.

Mr Stephens: The real reason why people are not coming into politics is not so much the remuneration as the application of rigid party politics.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: History denies the truth of what the member says. In terms of rigidity and inflexibility, in years gone past there was much less flexibility than now. That is true within the Labor Party. The constraints on Labor members are like constraints of cotton compared with what they were when Bert Hawke was Premier and Joe Chamberlain was Secretary of the Labor Party.

I do not know much about the Opposition's side of politics, but I suspect that there rigidity is less than it was previously. During those former times of greater inflexibility we attracted into politics the people I am talking about who would now think twice before coming in. The biggest reason is the way in which politicians are held up publicly to ridicule, to criticism, and to blackguarding by people in the community.

Mr Stephens: It is not exclusive. In some instances it is self-inflicted.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: I am not saying some of it is not deserved, or that all of it is not deserved. Whether deserved or not, that is the reason.

I have never been a critic of the Press. Some individual journalists are less professional than they should be. I rarely argue with an editor. Sometimes I argue with a journalist and let him know what I think.

Mr Stephens: That is where I have gone wrong. I have usually argued with the editor and not the journalist.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: I seem to have had worse treatment than the member. Sometimes I will take something up. For example, when the Hillarys marina controversy was on, I thought the Government was being treated unfairly. I took the matter up with the editor because

there appeared to be a certain disposition on the part of the newspaper. But generally, with isolated or even consistent stories, one can usually tell if a journalist is being unprofessional. One can usually tell if a journalist has his or her mind made up in regard to a story. I answer them in a perfunctory way and let them write what they want. One can take a bit of buffeting. In the end most journalists will say, "There was a blue," or something else.

The member for Nedlands knows something about this example. When the O'Connor business was on, the member for Nedlands said a whole lot of things in this House, but the newspaper printed something on the front page that he did not say. I looked at the report and said, "He did not say that." It was an unfair report. A new reporter had come in and seen members carrying on as they always do in this place. He thought he was reporting World War III. A new reporter coming into the House, seeing grown men carrying on as we sometimes do, would think, "This is a big story."

Mr MacKinnon: It was a big story. It was pretty diabolical stuff.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: This was not. The Leader of the Opposition should wait till he hears the punch line. I wondered how to correct this report. I could not go back to the journalist—it was a page one lead—so I made my dissatisfaction known to the head of the parliamentary gallery. I received a copy of the story.

The next night in question time I repeated it to the member for Nedlands. I gave him a chance to deny what was in the newspaper. He had not said it, but he did not deny it. The next day on page one the report appeared under the lead "Member for Nedlands", so it got a real cook.

The member for Nedlands got up and said, "Hang on, I did not say that." He was right, he did not say it. I said, "You did not say it, but the next night, when I read it to you, you had an opportunity to deny it but you did not."

Mr Court: I cannot answer questions in question time.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: I do not want to stir the member up, but he knows what I am saying.

Mr Court: The headline said "Burke calls Court a liar", or something like that.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: I do not know what the headline was, but the first story gave me a bake and the second sorted out the member for Nedlands nicely. The third night the member

for Nedlands came back with *Hansard* and said, "I did not say this." I said, "Yes, I checked *Hansard*, you did not say it. The only way I could right the situation from my point of view was to repeat to you what you had not said but you refused to deny it." When the member saw the page one lead he was rightly disenchanted about it.

Mr Court: You have now taught me how to handle the Press.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: That was really handling the member.

Who wants to see John Tonkin, at the age of 86 now, having to park his car half a mile from an official function and either walk or be dropped, and then have Mrs Tonkin take the car back again?

No-one wants to see that. One of the things the Government did before referring the Bill here was to let former Premiers have use of a car and a driver.

Mr MacKinnon: On official occasions.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: Yes, and I thought that was reasonable, but that is another perk. Sir Charles Court, former Liberal Premier, is quoted in the *Daily News* of 24 February 1987 as follows—

"I know how embarrassing it can be for a government when it has to deal with these things—through no fault of the government of the day," he said. He had never received any government-paid office accommodation or secretarial help.

Why after finishing eight years as Premier, umpteen years as a Minister, three years as a Leader of the Opposition, and then deciding to leave, should he not get any assistance with an office or anything else? That is not fair.

Mr Watt: There were certainly a lot of calls on his time.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: I would think so, and a lot of letters to answer.

Mr Watt: Yes, from the public.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: Yes; that is what I mean. I would not think that Sir Charles Court is going to be shooting around the place, spending up big or living high on the hog at the taxpayers' expense. I do not see why he should not get some assistance. The newspaper article continues—

Apart from the gold rail pass, he had no travel or accommodation allowances though on special occasions the government had provided a car and driver.

I know for a fact that Sir Charles Court had been asked to address different meetings around the country because he was a former Premier and a long-serving public figure, and had been unable to address them or had only been able to address them at his own expense. That is not right.

Mr Watt: That is certainly true of a number of invitations he has had to Albany for the chamber of commerce and that sort of thing.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: Yes. I have usually managed to land on my feet, and in another 20 years' time when I step down as the longest serving Premier in the State's history, I will be 60, and like my brother I will be able to go on the pension and keep every second Thursday free to go down to the post office. By that time I have no doubt the Labor Party will have a health benefits card for all pensioners.

Mr MacKinnon: A number of your colleagues are going to be rather upset about this new-found commitment to longevity in the office of Premier. The Minister for Education has gone decidedly cold, and I am sure the Minister for Labour, Productivity and Employment has also.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: If my six children each have six children, there will be 36 grandchildren, all of whom I have no doubt will want to take their grandmother and grandfather out from time to time, which will save the taxpayers' money. I am not expecting to be a burden on the taxpayers.

There are not many former Premiers or former Ministers, or even former members of Parliament, so I thank members for their support of this Bill.

Mr Court: Is the Premier talking about former Premiers? What is the amendment for?

Mr BRIAN BURKE: This is still the second reading debate. We are talking about former Premiers, but I indicated I would move an amendment to put former Ministers in so they can have their situation looked at by the tribunal as well.

Mr Williams: What about former Speakers?

Mr BRIAN BURKE: I have not gone that far yet. As I said at the outset, what I am keen to do is to separate this matter from myself, firstly, but also from the Government, and that is something that any Government that members opposite may belong to in the future should be pleased with and hopefully it will get a more sensible and consistent set of decisions from the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal.

The Government is in the process of appointing a third member of the tribunal, and it is not easy to find someone who is prepared to serve on that body, especially now that it also looks at the pensions of former members. Members may remember Don Taylor, and I do not think it will ever be possible to appoint a former member now because pensions are considered by the tribunal also.

I commend the Bill to the House and thank members for their support.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee

The Deputy Chairman of Committees (Dr Lawrence) in the Chair; Mr Brian Burke (Treasurer) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2 put and passed.

Clause 3: Section 6B inserted—

Mr BRIAN BURKE: As indicated during the second reading debate, I wish to move an amendment to clause 3 to consign former Ministers to the deliberation of the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal, so I move an amendment—

Page 2, line 11—To insert after "State" the following—

, former Ministers of the Crown

Mr MacKINNON: I intend to oppose this amendment. While the Treasurer did consult the Opposition about the rest of the Bill, he did not consult it in any way about his intention to move this amendment. In fact, the Opposition has not discussed it in the party room.

Mr Brian Burke: I am happy to withdraw it.

Mr MacKINNON: I place on record why I do not believe that former Ministers should be given better treatment than other members of the Parliament, because if the benefit is to extend to former Ministers of the Crown, why should former Ministers be better treated than, for example, the Speaker who serves the Parliament for the same period of time, or a Chairman of Committees, or a President, or a Leader of the Opposition, or a Leader of the National Party, or a deputy leader?

Mr Williams: What about the Whips?

Mr Brian Burke: Those members already are.

Mr MacKINNON: Yes, in terms of the superannuation benefits.

Mr Brian Burke: No, that is not right. They are entitled to a number of benefits that the member's Government introduced. For

example, if one is a Minister of the Crown for three years, one is entitled to a lifetime gold pass. The Ministers are already treated differently.

Mr MacKINNON: They may well be.

Mr Brian Burke: I am happy to withdraw the amendment and not proceed with it.

Mr MacKINNON: The Opposition does not subscribe—whether it did it previously or not—to the principle of former Ministers being granted special benefits. Ministers are paid in office for their particular tasks and they are given that entitlement, which I think is fair and reasonable; but I do not believe a former Minister who has served this State or this Parliament is entitled to a better benefit than any other member who may have served this Parliament for many years in a good and honourable capacity.

I instance, for example, Hon. Vic Ferry, who has just announced his intention to retire from another place. That member, while he has never been a Minister, has made a tremendous contribution to this Parliament over the years in his various roles, but he is not entitled to any special benefit. I cannot see why Hon. Vic Ferry should be treated any better or worse than I, should I not ever be a Premier in this Parliament. I do not perceive it as a proper amendment. I understand there are some benefits now, but I do not think they should be extended any further. By including this amendment, members are giving to the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal an instruction that these benefits are to be extended, and I do not think they should be.

Mr STEPHENS: The National Party supports the Leader of the Opposition's objection to the amendment. The point has been made that if one is going to start giving special benefits for Ministers, where does one draw the line if one goes right down the pecking order? To give an analogy, when one talks about services to the country there are many people who in time of war offer their services to the country and are prepared to risk their lives. When those people retire they receive repatriation benefits. However, I am not aware that officers receive better repatriation benefits than the poor privates.

I am not aware that that principle has ever been challenged anywhere. On the same basis, I cannot see that Ministers of the Crown have made a greater contribution to the political service of the country than have members who never got beyond the backbenches.

As a matter of fact, from my own personal experience, in many ways I had a more difficult role to play as a backbencher than as a Minister. After all, Ministers have assistants to do the hack work; but as a backbencher, particularly when only two of us were representing the National Party, we had to do all the hack work ourselves. In many respects we worked a damned sight harder than we do now.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: In seeking leave to withdraw the amendment, can I just say that there is a fundamental misconception about the amendment and what it means on the part of the two members who have made a contribution on this clause. The amendment does not prejudice the decision of the tribunal in any way. The tribunal may well decide that what the two members who have spoken have said is the correct position in respect of former Ministers' allowances; I do not know. But what those members have said indicates that they believe the tribunal will naturally give former Ministers additional benefits. I do not know that that is the case.

Mr Stephens: I was saying it should not even be considered because it is not necessary.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: If that is the position the member for Stirling wants to occupy, I indicate to him that one of the present problems is that whoever it was some dim, dark age ago decided that what the member is saying was not right, and what the member for Murdoch said is not right, because a series of benefits is now given to former Ministers.

Mr MacKinnon: On how many occasions do you go to functions now, as I do, such as on Saturday night, when you see a former Minister? I do see former Premiers such as Ray O'Connor and Sir Charles Court, but I very rarely see a former Minister at those functions.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: The Leader of the Opposition is not following me; I am not arguing with that. What I am saying is that the view he has expressed might be the one the tribunal adopts. It might say that the present benefits for Ministers are not capable of being supported on the facts, and it might remove them. All I am asking is, why put a Treasurer or a Government—whether it be a Liberal Government or a Labor Government—into a position of having to make that decision?

Mr MacKinnon: We are saying you do not have to make a decision.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: We do, because there is a system now that gives former Ministers benefits. The matter is of passing interest to me; I

really do not mind. I am not about to try to force things through in respect of the entitlements of members of Parliament or anything else.

I seek leave to withdraw the amendment.

Mr THOMPSON: If this amendment is agreed to, we will create a situation where the quality of members of Parliament will be coloured by the amount of salary and benefits available to members. In my view the Brand Government did the correct thing in removing the responsibility for setting salaries and other benefits of office from the Parliament to the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal. We should leave all those things in the hands of the tribunal and desist from creating a situation of trying to point-score on the question of the amount of money made by a member of Parliament.

Mr Brian Burke: I have no argument with that. All I am trying to do is to shift the responsibility for making decisions about Ministers' entitlements to the tribunal.

Mr THOMPSON: I agree. I believe that should be the case, because if it is set up by the Parliament one of two things will happen, and experience shows that it will be to the detriment of members of Parliament and people who have served in higher office. What inevitably will happen is that one or two individuals in this Parliament will grandstand on the point and Governments will walk away from the issue; whereas if it is done by the tribunal it will be kept away from this forum, and it is more likely that justice will be done.

Mr Brian Burke: If there were no existing benefits for former Ministers beyond those benefits applicable to former members, I would not have moved the amendment. The problem is that a set of benefits is available to former Ministers that is not available to former members. They relate to things such as being able to purchase a car they have been using, or such as the gold pass they get after three years' continuous service. Those benefits were already in place and I resented the pressure I was coming under from all sorts of people—not present Ministers but former Ministers.

Mr MacKinnon: If that is your argument, why don't you extend the benefits to Cabinet Secretaries, and so on?

Mr Brian Burke: When that question was raised before, I indicated I had not got around to thinking about it; but in all of those instances where there are benefits, the Govern-

ment has decided such decisions should be taken out of the hands of politicians and given to the tribunal.

Mr THOMPSON: I agree.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause put and passed.

Title put and passed.

Report

Bill reported, without amendment, and the report adopted.

Third Reading

Leave granted to proceed forthwith to the third reading.

Bill read a third time, on motion by Mr Brian Burke (Treasurer), and transmitted to the Council.

CANNING VALE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Relocation: Grievance

MR MacKINNON (Murdoch—Leader of the Opposition) [4.28 pm]: I raise a grievance concerning the Canning Vale Primary School. The Minister for Education would have some knowledge of the matter, having represented the area concerned previously as the member for Gosnells. The Canning Vale Primary School was built in 1913, so it is now in its 75th year.

I was elected to Parliament in February 1977 when, as the member for Murdoch, I received my first inquiry concerning the closure of that school. Subsequently several questions were asked about the closure in the period leading up to 1982, just prior to the election. At that time, as Minister for Industrial, Commercial and Regional Development, I had the responsibility for the Industrial Lands Development Authority, and both the then Minister for Education and I had agreed that the school should close at the end of 1983. There was quite a deal of to-ing and fro-ing between parents of children at the school and members of Parliament, with a series of public meetings being held at that time.

Mr Pearce: It was not in your electorate when you moved to close it, was it?

Mr MacKINNON: No, but many of the people who were voting were parents of children who attended that school, and they were in my electorate at that time.

In any event the decision was made, and prior to that election many commitments were made by members of Parliament. I will read to

the House for the benefit of the Minister—lest he has forgotten his commitment—part of what he said in December 1982 in a letter to the Principal of the Canning Vale Primary School—

I will continue my interest in the future of the school, in the belief that it will be a great pity if the present school, with its attractive grounds, should be destroyed. If that should happen, I believe that parents of children in the area are entitled to a replacement school.

So in December 1982 the Minister clearly indicated that he believed there should be a school to replace the Canning Vale Primary School, if it were decided to close that school at any time. Of course at that time the present Minister for Community Services, Hon. Kay Hallahan, was standing for election for the first time. In a letter dated 16 December 1982, Hon. Kay Hallahan said—

We are well aware of the understandable determination of the families in Canning Vale to retain the advantages of a school in the immediate and rural locality.

The “we” refers to herself and to the then shadow Minister for Education and member for Gosnells, Mr Bob Pearce.

On 10 February 1983, a week before the election, a letter bearing a letterhead for Hon. Kay Hallahan and Eric Ripper—who has run second several times in trying to gain election to this Parliament—read as follows—

On receipt of your letter I had another discussion with Bob Pearce who is the Shadow Minister for Education, regarding the school. We are firmly resolved that if on gaining government, we find that the actions of the current Liberal government preclude any reversal of decisions already taken to sell the school land, then the provision of another school in Canning Vale will be made.

I hope this letter provides the reassurance your members need of my support for your area.

The letter continued—

I am a great believer in communities identifying their own needs and being assisted in obtaining same. I trust we will have a good working relationship following the outcome of the State Elections.

Hon. Kay Hallahan signed the letter.

After the election the life of the school was extended and credit must be given to the Minister for Education on behalf of the people in that community, who thanked him at the time for that extension, which was to the end of 1987, when he indicated there would be a replacement school available. However prior to the election—it is strange how many of these issues arise at such a time—in a letter bearing the letterhead of Hon. Robert Hetherington and Terry Johnson, the two Australian Labor Party candidates for the 1986 election, dated 30 January of that year, was a photocopy of a letter to Mr Johnson from Mr Pearce, which read—

With respect to your meeting with me this morning I write to confirm that a new school to replace the existing Canning Vale Primary School will be constructed next year in time for the beginning of the 1988 school year.

At all times the indication given to people in the Canning Vale area from the Government and the Minister was that a school would indeed be constructed to replace the Canning Vale Primary School. Now we find that is not to be the case. In answer to a question I asked recently, the Minister indicated that the Canning Vale Primary School would be closed this year and that parents would have to send their children—in the words of a departmental spokesman—to the “many other” schools in the area, including the Langford, Burrendah, Lynwood, Leeming, Rostrata, West Lynwood, Yarwood, and Forest Crescent Primary Schools. The Minister may say, “Well sure we built the replacement school; it’s Forest Crescent” but I put it to the Minister that there is certainly no school, in the words of Hon. Kay Hallahan, that is in any way at all in line with what the community of Canning Vale wants. It is not in a rural environment and does not fulfil the needs of that particular community. The community was led to believe by both the Minister, the member for South East Metropolitan Province, the candidate for Murdoch at the last election and the other member for South East Metropolitan Province that it would in fact have a school in Canning Vale to service its needs.

I hasten to add that the parents of Canning Vale do not want a new school; they are not asking for the Ritz; all they want is to retain their present school. In terms of facilities and bricks and mortar the parents admit that the school is not the best available; but in terms of character it is probably one of the best in the

metropolitan area. All the parents want are the current facilities transported down the road. The cost for that is not exorbitant; the Minister in answer to question 1579 said—

The estimated cost of providing temporary classrooms with permanent toilets is \$212 000. This figure does not include site acquisition, grassed play areas or bore and reticulation.

The grassed play area and the bore and reticulation are already in place.

On top of that, in this year's "Comment News" under the heading "Offer to move school for free" the following appears—

A Canning Vale transport contractor has offered to move the Canning Vale Primary School buildings to a new site at no cost.

It seems that we have a community wanting a school to service its area—not a super school in terms of super facilities but a special school in terms of the environment it offers the community its services.

To use the words of the member for South East Metropolitan Province, Hon. Robert Hetherington, there are many reasons why it should be retained. He put those points to the Minister himself, and I hope the Minister will consider them. Firstly, according to Hon. Robert Hetherington, the number of local children is likely to grow steadily with new housing developments in the area, such as the Livingstone Estate. Approximately 64 children from the Canning Vale area attend the Canning Vale Primary School and they will need to be bused to alternative schools should this facility not be built, a cost which needs to be taken into account when looking at the ongoing economics of the decision.

Secondly, according to Hon. Robert Hetherington, the residents of the area have a real sense of community and have moved away from traditional suburbs in order to achieve a lifestyle which they want to share with their children, and the school is very much a part of that lifestyle. I do not think the Minister could argue with that.

Thirdly, the children will have to travel reasonably long distances to school across roads that are being developed to take increasing volumes of traffic. Nicholson Road is one of those roads, as well as Ranford Road. The Minister, having to traverse some of those

roads himself, will know how busy they can get. Finally in his letter Hon. Robert Hetherington said—

It might be instructive to do a cost analysis of the proposed shifting of the school. The parents have not asked for a complete new school. There would have to be a toilet block built. Apart from this the parents are happy to have the transportables being used by the present school. If the school is closed the children will have to be bused to alternative schools. Perhaps the savings from not having to do this would justify the shifting of the school.

While I understand that the Minister for Education has already made the decision, I would like him to reconsider that decision to take into account the commitments he gave. He can argue about the details of the commitment he gave, or whatever, but he knows the intent was to indicate to those people that a school would be built to replace the Canning Vale Primary School along the lines of the present school. I did not refer to Forest Crescent School, which is a very large school servicing a suburban area, but a school servicing Canning Vale, an area which was in the past serviced by a school. The residents are asking only that the present quality of the service be maintained.

MR PEARCE (Armada—Minister for Education) [4.38 pm]: I suppose it is rare in the life of a House that a grievance is directed from one member to a Minister where the member has had as much of a role in bringing about the problems complained of as the Minister to whom the grievance is directed.

I thank the member for his honesty in confessing that it was in fact he, as a Minister for Industrial, Commercial and Regional Development, who made the decision to acquire the site of the Canning Vale Primary School and to close the school at the end of the 1983 school year.

Mr MacKinnon: It was acquired before I became the Minister.

Mr PEARCE: The whole genesis of this sad story rests in the life of the last Liberal Government, when the decision was made to close that school in order to develop an industrial area on the site. This was a particularly attractive school; I used to drive past it on my way to teach at Lynwood Senior High School. I certainly worked with the people in that area to try to have the school remain open until after the end of the 1983 school year.

In fact I was successful in achieving that outcome. I remind the House of the decision made by the Government of the day, which was not to build a replacement school but to close that school and to bus the children to the Lynwood Primary School, which not only is not in the area but also was not even the closest primary school at that stage.

It just happened to be a primary school in the general area which had some spare capacity. The students were to be given no choice as to where they went—just bused to Lynwood. One of the first things I did on becoming Minister was to discuss the matter with the Deputy Premier, who took over from the now Leader of the Opposition responsibility for the Industrial Land Development Authority, and he and I forced ILDA to the position where it did not seek to bulldoze the school but to keep it open as long as possible. We set ourselves the target of keeping the school open until the end of the 1986 school year.

Mr Mensaros: The first thing you did was to abolish your private lift.

Mr PEARCE: That is right. I fibbed to the House; it was the second thing I did after attending to the lift, and there is a strange story attached to that.

Once we had agreement to keep the school open I had a number of meetings with the local community about what would happen at the end of that time. I hoped we could afford to keep the school open longer than 1987. I hoped we could reverse the decision about the use of the land and keep the school open for all time. It had been the department's intention to bus the children to Lynwood, but when I made it clear that it was not acceptable to me if we could get the life of the school extended the department proposed to combine schools and have a school on the edge of Canning Vale and the metropolitan area to cater for two lots of growing population, and to act a little rationally with regard to scarce capital funds. I discussed that with people in the Canning Vale area as early as 1983, and they knew perfectly well what one of the fallback positions had to be.

While the school stayed open my plan for maintaining it on that site fell through because the school caught fire and the permanent buildings were burnt down, if I remember correctly, towards the end of 1985. The department then wanted to close the school as there were no permanent buildings left, only the transportables on what was a very attractive

and well-developed, if rather small, school site. I insisted that the school should remain open and that the permanent buildings should be replaced with transportable buildings, and that is the state in which the school exists at present.

The beauty of the school is in its gardens and the large trees in the surrounds, not in the buildings themselves which are not of an acceptable quality to be permanent buildings for a school in the near metropolitan area.

Once the school burnt down we had to start looking at the replacement school notion. I had a range of meetings with people from Canning Vale and went through the files and looked at all the figures. One of the startling figures which was drawn to my attention was that over the time that this matter had gone on the population of the school had declined quite considerably. For example, in 1983 when we were talking about replacements and keeping the school open the school population was more than 120. Last year when we started to look seriously again at the future of the school the numbers had declined to little over 80.

There were two reasons for that; one was to do with the general dynamics of the area, but another was to do with the fact that members of the community were starting to make the decision that the type of school they had in those transportable buildings was not as good as they expected for their children; or they did not see the school having a long-term future. For whatever reason, they started to move their children into surrounding schools. Equally, the numbers at the Canning Vale School were sustained only by a considerable influx of people from surrounding areas. When one went through the rolls of the Canning Vale School one saw that between 40 per cent and 50 per cent of the 80-odd children in that school did not come from Canning Vale.

Mr MacKinnon: That is just not true.

Mr PEARCE: It is true. I have gone through the rolls myself.

Mr MacKinnon: You had better go through them again because I think the current enrolment is something like 90, and more than two-thirds come from Canning Vale.

Mr PEARCE: Even if we took those figures of 90 and two-thirds, the Leader of the Opposition is saying that 60 children come from Canning Vale.

Mr MacKinnon: More than 60.

Mr PEARCE: I do not think the figure is as high as that; I am talking about figures which were taken out towards the end of last year. The Leader of the Opposition is saying we have to look at a replacement school for 60 children. That number of children is getting to be very small in terms of using very scarce capital works funds.

The other thing which has overtaken events in terms of discussions about the Canning Vale Primary School is what has happened at the Commonwealth and State levels in putting brakes on the States for borrowing for capital works funds. In 1983 when we thought about closing the school we had a capital works programme of a size which might well have accommodated that. Now we find the rhetoric of the Commonwealth, whether Liberal Party or Labor Party, or indeed a Liberal Party State Government, is to the effect that the State has to draw in its belt and cut back on borrowings, and help bring down interest rates. Everybody wants that to occur, but the bottom line is that capital funds are not easy to come by, and one has to assess priorities very carefully. When one looks at a school which once had 120 Canning Vale children in it and now even on the Leader of the Opposition's best figure has 60, and my understanding is that it is less than that, it is hard to find \$1 million or so to build a new school for Canning Vale.

Mr MacKinnon: It is not \$1 million.

Mr PEARCE: It is \$1 million to build a new school.

Mr MacKinnon: In your words, it was \$212 000 less the cost of shifting.

Mr PEARCE: I am explaining how I worked it through with the Canning Vale community. One could not justify the expenditure of \$1 million for that number of children. Then we had to build the Forest Crescent School. The department was anxious that at the time the Forest Crescent School was built I should close the Canning Vale School in order to have that clear transfer of Canning Vale children from one school to the other. I might say that for many Canning Vale children Forest Crescent School is actually closer than the Canning Vale School they are attending, because Canning Vale is a very dispersed area.

At the time people said to me, "Let us not have a new school at the moment; let us keep the old transportable buildings and have them transferred at a cost of \$212 000." I have not had an approach personally about the free transport proposal—I have only seen it in the

paper—and that figure is not for the main costs of that proposal which are to establish the services to the site which would be necessary to sustain the school; that is, water, sewerage, power, and the like. That is the main cost of the \$212 000, as well as building the toilet block. The actual cost of moving the buildings down the road would be perhaps \$10 000 or \$20 000, but not much more.

The Leader of the Opposition is still asking us to outlay something like \$250 000 to provide for 60 children who can be better provided for, in many cases closer to home, in surrounding schools. I would have preferred to build a new school at Canning Vale and that quite clearly was the Government's intention over many years if we could not save the school which the former Liberal Government had closed. But when it comes down to assessing priorities in the capital works programme and considering the other children we would have to take that money away from in order to give it to the Canning Vale community, we had to make the hard decision that we simply could not afford it at present. That is a tough decision to make.

Mr MacKinnon: Those 60 children, which will grow to 70 or 90 in a year or two, will have to be bused—

Mr PEARCE: The Canning Vale community has been saying to me since 1983 that the number of students will grow each year with this development or that. The fact is that the numbers have shrunk every year the discussions have been going on, because all the people in Canning Vale are not doing—

Mr MacKinnon: Aren't you aware of the new subdivisions?

Mr PEARCE: There were new subdivisions in 1983 and 1984, but many of those children simply have not gone to that school.

I am saying it was a hard decision to make and I am sorry we had to make it. The financial circumstances of our times necessitate many hard decisions like that. Given that the circumstances and the difficulties which were thrust on us by poor decision-making, in my view, and which ignored the wishes of Canning Vale people in 1982, in which the Leader of the Opposition was the ringleader. I am sorry we could not do better. If we had left it to the Leader of the Opposition those people in that community would not have had a school for four years now. Even if they feel badly about me I think

most of them concede they got four more years out of the Canning Vale School because of the election of this Government.

TRAFFIC

Perth: Grievance

DR ALEXANDER (Perth) [4.48 pm]: The grievance I wish to raise in today's debate is that of traffic management in the Perth electorate. As I indicated in my inaugural speech last Thursday, Perth City is beset with traffic problems, many brought about by the continuing development of the city centre. The increasing work force in the city and its tendency to drive rather than use public transport for work journeys has increased those problems.

In addition, the city is the focus, of course, of the metropolitan roads system, and also because of the configuration of the metropolitan area it takes much by-pass traffic as well as traffic destined for the city centre and surrounds. At a time of rapidly increasing car ownership and use the net result for the electorate I represent, much of which lies adjacent to the city centre, is a serious traffic problem. Statistics for the State show car ownership levels in 1966 ran at around 300 cars per 1 000 adults. By 1986 that had doubled to 600 cars per 1 000 adults, and it is expected to be 700 by the year 2000. Shortly thereafter we will have more cars than people in the State, and no doubt in the metropolitan area.

Residential areas in my electorate are increasingly besieged by through traffic which seeks alternatives to the major roads that criss-cross the electorate. These roads become fairly congested in peak hours. As a result, through traffic seeks bypasses and shortcuts through residential areas creating safety and noise problems for local residents.

This is a familiar problem throughout the metropolitan area. However, I believe it is worse in the inner city area because of the concentration of traffic and major roads there.

Essentially, it is a local authority problem, and, gradually, some local authorities throughout the metropolitan area are coming to grips with it. The Perth City Council has made some belated efforts in this direction. I will come back to those in a moment. The State Administration is also involved by virtue of the fact that the Main Roads Department is responsible for the major arterial roads in the metropolitan area. The fact that two levels of government are involved can create extra co-ordination problems, as I will explain.

In the City of Perth, the first difficulty is that the council has been rather slow in addressing this problem, although it has been aware of it for many years. In recent years, some traffic studies have been undertaken in conjunction with consultants and the Main Roads Department, and plans have been drawn up for limiting that traffic in some residential areas in the electorate. At the same time, the Main Roads Department, the State Planning Commission and its predecessor, the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority, have moved to clarify their intentions on widening the so-called "blue roads"—those roads designated as major arterials in the metropolitan region scheme. Several of those roads, such as Lord and Bulwer Streets, have significant residential frontages. In recent years, the Main Roads Department and the MRPA have moved to clarify their intentions on streets such as Bulwer and Lord Streets, and plans for their widening have been finalised. Fortunately, the proposed widenings will adversely affect only a small number of houses.

Unfortunately, in my view, plans have not been finalised for the widening of Beaufort, Loftus, William, and Walcott Streets, which have had widening reservations placed on them. Local traffic planning also becomes more difficult because plans to limit traffic in residential areas between the major arterials throws more traffic onto the major roads. Those plans need to be finalised as soon as possible.

I hope also that the Main Roads Department will act to solve pedestrian crossing problems not peculiar to my electorate, but concentrated there, and particularly in Fitzgerald Street near the North Perth Shopping Plaza, where a serious traffic safety problem has existed in recent years for residents attempting to cross this road.

The Main Roads Department recently agreed to place traffic lights at a nearby intersection in Angove Street, which will at least provide a break in the traffic near the centre. However, it seems there is still a case for pelican crossing lights to be installed near the shopping centre before further serious accidents occur. The situation is extremely dangerous at present. There have been several accidents involving injury and even death, and it is welcome news that something is to be done nearby. However, more is required. Certainly local residents are fed up with the delays in improving their con-

ditions and are disenchanted with the situation at present, particularly as it is unsafe for families with young children and for older people.

Elsewhere, however, the city council needs to act more quickly to keep traffic out of residential areas. In the North Perth, Mt Lawley, East Perth, and West Leederville areas, action is urgently needed in this regard. In the case of North Perth and Mt Lawley, the council, after years of delay, is in the process of implementing a plan involving median islands, roundabouts, and the like in the area bounded by Fitzgerald, Walcott, and Vincent Streets. The plan has something to recommend it because it will keep through traffic out of some of the area. However, it seems to be forcing people to use nearby streets, which is a classic problem associated with these solutions. In one area the problem is two-fold because a so-called "loop road system" has been put in which prevents traffic from crossing the area and is more inconvenient for local residents than that which previously existed. The result for residents is that the solution is worse than the problem.

The council tells me that it is monitoring the effects of its scheme. However, local residents are particularly angry about it and, unless action is taken, they will ensure that the council does more than monitor the situation.

The point emerging from this is that the proposed local solutions are inappropriate to the problem. Closing residential streets to through traffic altogether may suit some local residents, but more often than not it inconveniences many others. The same effect can be achieved by narrowing roads and by providing roundabouts at key points in residential areas. The Dutch have come up with a solution which they call "woonerfs". The idea is to limit through traffic in residential areas without actually closing streets. They narrow street entrances and narrow and pave streets. Those ideas have been adopted by some local authorities, but the Council of the City of Perth is yet to test them.

I believe such a system would be usefully applied across the electorate. I would like to see the Main Roads Department, which is certainly aware of the need for traffic management in the Perth electorate, encouraging local authorities to adopt this solution. The report entitled "Transport 2000" released three years ago recommended the "woonerfs" solution. I want to see that system implemented as a way around pressing local traffic problems.

All in all, there is a considerable local traffic problem in the electorate. Relatively low-cost solutions which are urgently required are available.

MR TROY (Mundaring—Minister for Transport) [4.55 pm]: The member for Perth seems to hold a misconception about the Main Roads Department's responsibilities for roads such as Walcott, Beaufort, Fitzgerald, and Loftus Streets. All of those streets are controlled by the Perth City Council. They are not declared main roads. They may be arterial roads, but arterial roads are not under the control of the Main Roads Department.

However, the Main Roads Department has some involvement in traffic light operations and other operations including channeling, pedestrian islands, and other aspects of road design. I will cover the comments made in respect of the four roads and then come back to matters that I see as important, including the emerging problem of congestion which should be addressed by both levels of government.

Walcott, Beaufort, Fitzgerald, and Loftus Streets are blue roads under the metropolitan region scheme. The question of widening their reservations lies with the State Planning Commission in consultation with the Perth City Council. I am happy to refer the member's comments to my colleague, the Minister for Planning.

The member for Perth referred to traffic control signals which will be installed shortly at the junction of Angove and Fitzgerald Streets. The installation of the lights has resulted from protracted negotiations between the Main Roads Department and the Perth City Council over channelisation requirements. Quite clearly, the maximum impact from lights cannot be achieved unless we take into account channelisation. It may be a little unfair to say that channelisation is an area which is not readily understood by local authorities. Normally there is a penalty associated with channelisation because part of the road parking capacity is lost. In other words, quite often there is a trade-off between commercial interests and the question of safety. When it comes to the question of commercial interests and the safety for an ageing population it really does not take too long to address which is the prime consideration of the two. That is the reason delays occur in decision-making.

It must be understood that with the provision of traffic lights there can be a significant benefit in the immediate vicinity of the lights.

and also the breakup of traffic flow down route can give pedestrians an advantage of crossing the road without interruption to the normal traffic flow. In the area referred to by the member for Perth I am sure that a side benefit will emerge from that installation.

On the question of traffic management generally, I indicate to the member for Perth and to other members that the Main Roads Department has increased its traffic management and design section. Traffic management is becoming more crucial. In these times of funding difficulties and constraints we must ensure that we take into account the very best designs in terms of balancing the volume of traffic we need to move safely. Therefore, the Main Roads Department is now moving towards a higher status for its traffic management section. I am sure that will lead to significant changes and will result in benefits to the general community.

In my time as Minister for Transport, I have been approached by the Local Government Engineers Association, which is very active in this State, to have something done about safety in road design. In discussions with me members of the association agreed it was appropriate for the Main Roads Department to be the focus of that activity. The department would certainly encourage the Local Government Engineers Association to provide valid input. With the department's being responsible for road design and its receiving the cooperation of the Local Government Engineers Association, there will, in the future, be significant improvement.

The question of road safety is not a simple exercise of reducing speeds within an urban area. This process was put to the Main Roads Department some months ago by the Perth City Council. The question of road safety cannot be addressed in isolation by simply changing the speed limit of 60 kilometres an hour to 40 kilometres an hour in a particular area. Unfortunately, not too many people take notice of speed signs unless they assess the speed limit to be a safe speed at which they can travel on that road.

Some interesting experiments have been conducted in this State and it has been found that in spite of the speed limit being 60 kilometres an hour, drivers were actually travelling at 85 kilometres an hour. When the speed limit was lifted from 60 kilometres per hour to 80 kilometres per hour the average speed decreased from 85 kilometres per hour. That indicated that people were taking far more notice of a sign that was relevant, in their perception, to

the safety of the road than one that was not. The Main Roads Department's response to the Perth City Council was that the department does not believe in treating signs in isolation.

I do not want to give the impression that that was the Perth City Council's single element solution. However, it was felt that there should be a more balanced approach to the question of road signs and to the other aspects of speed control such as the traffic control measures mentioned by the member for Perth—narrowing roads, and installing roundabouts and pavements which make drivers aware that there is a special safety need in the area. There certainly is great scope for the implementation of those forms of control, particularly within the urban areas of this State. The Main Roads Department will be pursuing these matters vigorously and providing advice to local authorities through its upgraded traffic management section.

The other aspect into which my colleague, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services had an input, concerns the question of law enforcement. Speed signs are totally ineffective without law enforcement. Of course, that raises another question: How effectively can urban areas be covered without that sort of overall enforcement programme?

The question of speed limits and road safety in urban areas must address not only speed signs, but also the traffic enforcement measures, together with traffic control mechanisms.

The member for Perth referred also to the question of the impact of implementing such changes in road designs on collector roads and the disadvantage caused to people who face an increased volume of traffic. It is not easy to answer the questions raised, but it is a problem which must be faced.

I am happy to advise the member for Perth that, as a result of his past experience, I would welcome his ideas. I will refer those ideas to the Main Roads Department for assessment and will ask it to monitor the situation. In determining the operation of traffic lights that have been installed, the Main Roads Department will assess the effectiveness of them, together with other traffic control mechanisms. Furthermore, I will raise the matter with my colleague, the Minister for Planning, to ensure those aspects of road widening are taken into account.

LAND VALUATIONS

Remote Areas: Grievance

MR GRAYDEN (South Perth) [5.09 pm]: My grievance is addressed to the Minister for Local Government. The matter to which I take exception concerns the manner in which one aspect of the Local Government Act is administered.

I do not single out for criticism the present Minister for Local Government. I am quite sure that the policy to which I refer is that which has been practised by successive Governments over a long period.

The aspect to which I take exception concerns the exorbitant rates sometimes levied on remote commercial properties which do not receive any benefit or services from the shire in whose area the property is located. This is a relatively common happening throughout Western Australia.

In some cases commercial undertakings are literally hundreds of kilometres from the nearest town or city in which the office of the shire concerned is established. In some instances they receive no services or benefits of any kind, yet they are rated on exactly the same basis as commercial undertakings within the towns and cities where those shire offices are established. The rates so garnered are spent for the benefit of ratepayers and citizens of the cities and towns to which I have referred. There is provision in the Local Government Act for it to be administered in a way which could grant release from the payment of rates to the people concerned.

It is also within the capability of the shire to grant that relief but, as far as the Government is concerned, the policy is being administered at present in a way which precludes assistance in such cases.

I will give one case in point: Twenty years ago two migrants and their families perceived a need for a motor hotel and service station complex on the Eyre Highway, 725 kilometres from Norseman, at Eucla on the Western Australia-South Australia border. At that time it was a relatively bold project. Many Australians with long experience in the accommodation industry had looked at the possibility of establishing such a complex and had not taken up that challenge. The two migrants and their families raised the necessary finance, surmounted the difficulties placed in their path, and, receiving no help of any kind from local authorities or any other authorities in the State, established the hotel and service station. Be-

cause one of the migrants came from Lithuania the complex was called the Amber Motor Hotel after the amber which was picked up on the shores of the Baltic Sea.

Although the complex was successfully established, the migrants were, of course, beset with many difficulties. Fuel, food, and labour costs are much higher than in less remote areas. Bearing in mind the additional costs and the remoteness of the establishment, one would have expected such a commercial undertaking to be exempt from rates. Far from being exempt, in the last 12 months the rates for this business have increased by approximately 2 000 per cent.

The complex has been rated under the unimproved capital value rating system since its establishment and in 1985 it attracted \$298.50 in rates. However, in 1986 the shire changed its rating system to gross rental values and the rates for the hotel complex increased to \$5 366.40, an increase in round figures of approximately 2 000 per cent. This complex, 725 kilometres from the nearest town of Norseman, receives no benefits or services of any kind except an annual health and building inspection by the shire, yet this increase has been imposed. Maintenance of the Eyre Highway is funded by the Commonwealth.

Naturally, when the proprietors received this notice of increase in rates they wrote to the shire pointing out how far they were from Norseman and indicating that they received no services. The Dundas Shire Council replied as follows—

Dear Sir

RE YOUR LETTER DATED 22/7/1986

I have attached a photo stat copy of the objections and appeals section of the Valuation of Land Act which you will need to observe if you wish to appeal against the valuations of your properties.

Unfortunately, you may not appeal against a rate levied by a Council. May I suggest should you wish to continue your appeal that you re-phrase the letter to emphasise you are appealing against the valuation and either return the same to the Shire or direct it to the Valuer General in Perth. You should perhaps note that for many years you enjoyed an extremely low rate because you were rated on an unimproved system in the same manner as a pastoral lease. The system has been altered, after approval was obtained from the Governor, to use Gross Rental Values.

This means you are now assessed in the same manner as motels and hotels in Norseman and Salmon Gums.

The Eucla Motel is within the area of the Shire of Dundas and the Shire provides services on a district wide basis available for use for all ratepayers and this includes yourself.

I appreciate your problem in respect to distance but the problems are also experienced by other remote locations. It would perhaps be also worth noting that while you state no services whatever are provided by the Shire, Health and Building Inspections, Tourist Promotion, are areas where services or benefits are directly provided to you.

Finally please note that under the Local Government Act, whether you appeal against your valuation or not, rates must be paid within the time stated on your rate notice.

I cannot comment on all the statements in that letter because I do not have the time. However, reference is made to tourism and I point out that the hotel complexes which are spaced at intervals across the Eyre Highway make it possible for Eastern States travellers to visit Western Australia. In that way they render a great service to our tourist industry.

Section 532(10) of the Local Government Act states that—

The Governor may from time to time—

... declare that any land or portion of a parcel of land is exempt from the municipal rates and by subsequent declaration cancel or vary the declaration.

That section of the Local Government Act is normally used for community purposes—sporting organisations and that kind of thing—it is not used for commercial purposes. It is also ministerial policy to deal only with applications from local authorities. That would preclude these people from making application. I ask the Minister whether he will give serious consideration to altering this policy and making use of this section of the Act in order to grant relief to commercial undertakings placed in this position.

I also point out that councils can assist in several ways, such as differential rating, and providing services to justify the rates. Finally, with the permission of the Minister, councils can write off the rates.

I ask the Minister to give some consideration to the difficulties faced by the Amber Motor Hotel, which receives no services or benefits and is in such a remote area.

MR CARR (Geraldton—Minister for Local Government) [5.18 pm]: The issue raised by the member for South Perth relates particularly to the respective merits of the two systems of valuation used for rating in Western Australia; namely, unimproved capital value and gross rental value.

In summary, the situation is that neither of these in its pure form is ideal for service stations, hotels or other forms of business premises. The background is that the system using unimproved capital values is most appropriate for rural situations and is used throughout all rural areas of Western Australia. The Act states that shires shall use the UCV system unless they have the approval of the Minister to do otherwise. On the other hand, the gross rental value system is much more appropriate for urban purposes and the Act states that towns and cities shall use the GRV system except when given approval to do otherwise by the Governor, on the advice of the Minister.

In practice, in many parts of Western Australia the vast majority of councils have a joint system in which their urban areas are rated on GRV and rural areas rated on UCV. It would be arguable to say that under the UCV system such things as service stations, hotels and some other business premises are in the main rated very much lower than they should be.

I acknowledge the points made by the member for South Perth about the remoteness of the locality.

On the other hand it would be true to say that under GRV, rate bills hit places such as service stations and hotels particularly harshly.

There is a difficulty when a council changes from one system to the other, and enormous dislocations occur. An example was quoted where the bill went from \$200 or \$300 to \$5 000. That has happened in other places. Indeed, those are the reasons why, until recently, many councils have been very reluctant to adopt gross rental values for their urban areas.

However, the Government was aware of this some three years ago, and amendments were made to the legislation with the aim of assisting councils which wanted to change from UCV to GRV in their urban areas.

The first initiative we put forward allowed for a phasing in of the change from UCV to GRV in a three-year period. Not many councils have adopted that measure.

A much more important measure included in the Act was the concept of differential rating. By differential rating we mean certain classifications of property are rated at a different rate in the dollar from others. For example, a council might say that those places zoned for service stations will be rated at so many cents in the dollar; those premises zoned for residential will be rated at a different number of cents in the dollar; and those places zoned for commercial or industrial use will have a different rate again. We introduced this legislation about three years ago.

Many councils have used the two different systems, one for rural areas and the other for urban areas. The urban area has been on GRV and the rural area on UCV, but within the GRV areas councils can adopt a differential rating for the different classifications and different zones in the urban areas.

When we introduced this facility we were a little cautious and established a working party pilot study involving about four or five councils working through some modelling. In the first year, only Augusta-Margaret River adopted differential rating. Since then it has been taken up by many more councils. At the last count something like 25 or 27 councils had adopted differential rating.

To translate differential rating to the situation in Eucla, the Shire of Dundas could adapt differential rating on GRV. It could have a special zone for service stations and set a rate for those service stations. It would not be able to differentiate between a service station in Eucla and one in Norseman, for instance, but it would be able to differentiate between service stations generally and other commercial premises.

Considerable scope has been placed in the Act to enable councils to address the type of problem raised by the member for South Perth. The member said there were a couple of other alternatives, and I refer to exemption from rates, or to the writing off of the rates. Those provisions exist in the Act.

This Government and previous Governments have adopted a policy of not being prepared to grant any more write-offs than those requests coming initially from the council. As Minister, I would be reluctant to put myself in the position of saying, over the top of the coun-

cil, notwithstanding its wishes, that such and such a place should not pay rates. I do not even engage in that sort of direction with regard, for example, to recreational facilities and suchlike.

Sporting organisations have recently wanted exemption from rates, or their rates written off, and councils have not been prepared to agree to that. I have not been prepared to involve myself in overriding a council, and I would be very reluctant to change that policy with regard to a situation such as this.

I hasten to add that the answers to the member for South Perth's problems are available and lie within the command of the shire concerned. It can grant exemption and I will confirm it. It can write off rates with my approval and I will give it. In most cases I would suggest the council adopt a policy of differential rating so that the premises most severely affected by gross rental values would be able to gain some considerable relief in that way.

[Questions taken.]

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.15 pm

SPORT AND RECREATION: FOOTBALL

Subiaco Oval: Grievance

DR LAWRENCE (Subiaco) [7.15 pm]: I address my grievance to the Minister for Sport and Recreation who is represented here by the Minister for Housing. It is not a popular grievance that I raise. It is not popular in this country to complain about the young men who prance around oval fields in coloured jackets and tight shorts, but I am concerned about parking problems associated with the VFL and WAFL games in my electorate. The residents of Subiaco and Leederville have complained, quite reasonably, about the traffic and parking problems generated by the Eagles' games and the final round WAFL games.

Mr Cowan interjected.

The **DEPUTY SPEAKER**: Order! The gentle, quiet interjection of the Leader of the National Party is most acceptable to the Deputy Speaker, but the level of background chatter is not on. All I want to hear is the member for Subiaco. That is warning No. 1. I can still hear the offenders.

Dr LAWRENCE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

This has been a serious problem for many years especially with interstate and final round fixtures. It is exacerbated now by the extra VFL matches played at the ground. The residents

have been long-suffering and mostly polite about the problems generated, but with the advent of the Eagles, the situation has become even more difficult because there will be 10 to 12 matches played at the ground with a crowd of between 20 000 and 30 000. The residents have, not surprisingly, risen to their feet and become very vocal. Some locals who are keen football supporters are able to walk to the ground, and a small number of people travel by train and bus. However, the majority who attend these games park their cars, many of them illegally, in the surrounding streets.

Parking in Subiaco and Leederville is limited; where these people park there are mainly narrow streets and there is little off-street parking. The Subiaco City Council and the Perth City Council, whose local government responsibility it is, and Westrail and the Police Department have been cooperating in an attempt to manage the traffic and parking problems in the area. In particular, they have been attempting to encourage the park-and-ride ticket. It is an ideal method of travelling to the game, and one much valued by supporters of the VFL in Melbourne. We have yet to convince local residents of the desirability of travelling by train, but Westrail would cooperate in transport to the Subiaco ground and Transperth would cooperate in transport to the WACA where it is also a problem.

The local council, Transperth, and Westrail have engaged in an advertising campaign to increase the patronage of trains and buses. Since then, patronage has increased from about 1 200 to 2 500 despite a fall in attendance in recent times at Victorian Football League matches. There is a significant capacity for extension of the service, particularly on Westrail, which would advantage that authority. It could increase the capacity without increasing the cost of managing up to 6 000 patrons.

The Subiaco City Council, the Perth City Council, Westrail, and Transperth, presently incur a substantial expenditure in advertising parking facilities. Subiaco Council alone will be paying about \$6 000 per annum on advertisements principally to encourage people to use the trains. The problem in this otherwise rosy cooperative venture is that the WAFL and the VFL have not been particularly forthcoming, apparently, about attempting to marry entrance fees at the gates with a park and ride facility, either for trains or buses, as is the case for VFL matches in Victoria.

I ask the Minister to put some pressure on those two bodies to agree to a joint ticket for the entry to the match and for the use of public transport. This is particularly desirable for West Coast Eagles' matches where tickets are sold in advance in any case.

We can point to the success of the use of public transport in these major enterprises by looking at ventures like the Pope's Mass at Belmont, where no private vehicles at all were allowed, and the custom of travelling to the Perth Royal Show by train.

The Subiaco Council and businesses basically support holding football matches at the oval. However, it has generated substantial problems. The Subiaco Council is turning one of the previous flat parking areas into a landscaped area including lakes and waterfalls. It is no longer suitable for parking. However, I understand that patrons still seek to push their way into the excavations.

I believe a combined ticket, with the cooperation of the Western Australian Football League and the VFL, would solve the problems of local residents. Traffic problems and congestion would be ameliorated and the substantial police presence needed to cope with large amounts of traffic would no longer be necessary. Residents' complaints about not being able to park near their homes would not occur. Many people who shop on Saturday mornings find, when they return to their homes, that they cannot park within kilometres of their residences and they are not impressed by that. It will also speed up access to the ground for patrons. No longer would patrons have to worry about the difficulties of parking and paying for parking. It would also result in increased revenue for Westrail and Transperth and, with the increased use of their facilities, people may be inclined to travel by train or bus on other occasions. It would also diminish the likelihood of parks in the local area being used as parking areas. It will leave those facilities for residents of the area to use at weekends. The local residents are not impressed when on weekends and public holidays, they are not able to avail themselves of the facilities provided to them by State and local governments.

In addition, so many people park their vehicles carelessly that, by the time they have to remove themselves from the area, they become frustrated and engage in vandalism around the streets. Recently a local resident complained about returning home to find that the picket fence from the back of his property had been

pulled down and was being used for a bonfire while the football patrons waited to find their way out of the area.

I urge the Minister to use his best offices, particularly as the WAFL enjoys Government subsidies, to encourage bodies to cooperate with State and local authorities to facilitate the development of a combined ticket for entrance to the game and for the use of public transport.

MR WILSON (Nollamara—Minister for Housing) [7.26 pm]: The member for Subiaco has put the case for the residents and local authorities in the Subiaco area most cogently and reasonably, as she usually does. As an avid spectator at football matches at the Subiaco Oval, I thought I would be able to plead my innocence by saying that I always pay for my parking in the park at West Coast Eagles' matches. However, I understand now that that is regarded adversely by the residents of Subiaco. I therefore cannot even plead my innocence in that regard even though I noticed the charges for parking have increased from \$1 to \$2.

Mr Blaikie: For the first time I think you and I are on the same side.

Mr WILSON: The member for Vasse should make the most of it because it will not happen again.

Any member who has a conscientious responsibility for the needs of his constituents will appreciate the sorts of problems outlined by the member. I imagine it would be very galling for local residents, having left their residences to go shopping or for some other purpose, to return home to find that they were not able to park in the immediate vicinity of their homes. It is easily understandable that their ire would be raised more regularly now that Subiaco Oval is being used for the very popular VFL games.

Mr Bryce: Could we do something about the bigotry of the VFL commentators?

Mr WILSON: I think history will take care of that. They will have to eat humble pie at the end of the season.

I am pleased to convey the concerns of the member to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. I will ask him to use his good offices to make further approaches to the Western Australian Football League and the VFL to see whether it is possible to make arrangements to encourage more spectators to avail themselves of the very good public transport facilities available to them on such occasions. I am sure

the Minister, who is already developing a good reputation in that area, will be able to make those representations with good effect.

The **DEPUTY SPEAKER**: Grievances noted.

ROAD TRAFFIC AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

MR COWAN (Merredin—Leader of the National Party) [7.31 pm]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this Bill is to insert into the Road Traffic Act a definition of the word "farm". It recognises the reality that many farms are composed of two or more separate parcels of land but, nevertheless, are managed as a single farm unit.

At present, the concessional licence provision enables a farmer to move vehicles from one parcel of land to another only where the parcels of land are contiguous. This narrow interpretation of section 19(5)(F)(iii) of the Act arises from comments made by the Minister in his second reading speech during debate on the Road Traffic Amendment Bill 1984. The interpretation has left many farmers in the situation where they cannot use the so-called farm plates to shift concessional licensed vehicles from one part of their farm to another. I am sure that members will appreciate the considerable inconvenience that the Act, as it stands at present, is creating. This Bill is a simple procedure to remove that anomaly.

Those members who are interested in reading *Hansard* will find that this second reading speech is exactly the same as the one delivered last year. It is really the same Bill being restored to the Notice Paper.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Pearce (Leader of the House).

SEIZURE OF CONNECTED PROPERTY BILL

Second Reading

MR MENSAROS (Floreat) [7.33 pm]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

There are different motives for committing a criminal offence. Very generally, these motives could be placed in four main categories.

Firstly, there are crimes for which the main motive is passion. This passion could be ire, hate, sex, or even love. I will give two examples

of crimes committed because of a highly passionate nature. One is the excessive belief that something is right and ought to be obtained, even illegally, which we commonly call fanaticism, and it can lead to the worst kind of terrorist activities. Another is the love for a terminally ill and badly suffering person which can result in mercy killing.

Secondly, need and necessity could motivate the most law-abiding person to commit an offence. Fortunately, this category does not apply in Australia at the present time. Only a century or so ago, even in the civilised countries, and today, in some of the very backward, underdeveloped places, it was and is not uncommon for hunger to drive people to steal or even commit violent crimes.

As the second category vanished in our relatively affluent society, the third category raised its head and it is a comparatively new phenomenon. Unemployment, accompanied by sufficient social welfare payments to obtain the basics for survival, created an idle life for many young people which, in turn, fuelled a lot of criminal activities.

The fourth category is by far the largest and most common of motives and is motivated largely by greed or profit.

I am firmly convinced that a desirable reduction of the crime rate can better be achieved by taking away the motive, or even reducing it, than by deterrent only.

The Government or Parliament could hardly reduce the passionate motive of the first category. Only circumstances, either individual, global, or much beyond the power of Government, can do this.

There is no need to worry about the motive of need. Historical developments towards a generally higher standard of living have taken care of that.

A solution to the third category, idleness, is the requirement to do some work for the unemployment benefit received. As members would be aware, this solution has been suggested by the Liberal Party, but so far rejected by the Federal Labor Government.

There is, however, a reasonable scope to at least reduce, if not eliminate, the profit motive of my fourth category. Greed itself, or the desire for profit as a result of criminal activity, cannot be reduced. Instead, the obtainable profit should be made more difficult to retain.

With one noticeable exception, it appears to me that so far no endeavour has been made in Western Australia to do anything about this. Even if a criminal offence is detected and the offender is brought to justice and convicted, the fruits of his crime, once converted into other assets, stay fairly safely with the criminal who, in most cases, can enjoy them undisturbed once he has served his term, or even during his incarceration. The provision in law to seize and forfeit such property, being the "profit" of a criminal offence and combined with energetic detection methods by the police, could in time reduce criminal activities, particularly in the more sophisticated fields of organised crime.

As far as I know, we have in Western Australia fairly extensive rights to seizure of property associated with drug crimes. The Misuse of Drugs Act 1981 contains detailed provisions whereby police officers are entitled to seize property which is "connected property". "Connected property", as defined in the Act, means property either possessed or obtained—

- (a) directly or indirectly by way of, as a result of, or for the purpose of; or
- (b) as or for the consideration for, the commission of an offence.

Connected property, once seized, can be the subject of an order for forfeiture to the Crown, or can be sold and the proceeds distributed as the judge directs.

As far as I can ascertain, for general offences the Criminal Code has provision for forfeiture only in sections 220 and 221, but they cover circumstances involving some fraudulent dealing in land.

The Murray report, commissioned by the previous Attorney General, Hon. Ian Medcalf, QC, is a very comprehensive and thorough review of the whole Criminal Code, but it does not appear to contain recommendations for forfeiting property acquired through criminal activity.

Belatedly a series of Bills have recently been introduced into the Commonwealth Parliament, and they will serve the same purpose, but in my view it will be in an unnecessarily extreme, all-embracing and overwhelming way.

In framing the provisions of this Bill, I have followed the Western Australian Misuse of Drugs Act 1981, not the recent array of Commonwealth legislation, for two reasons: The Commonwealth Bills—being the Proceeds of Crime Bill with its Miscellaneous Amendments Bill, the Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters

Bill, the Cash Transaction Reports Bill, and the Telecommunications (Interception) Amendment Bill—include fields which constitutionally are outside State jurisdiction, such as reporting by financial institutions, and intercepting telephone calls. But, more importantly, they are far too embracing, violating basic human rights and liberties as means to justify the end of seizing the property of the criminal.

This seems to be a pattern followed by the present Federal Labor Government in every respect; throw out a huge net, thoroughly inconvenience everyone, and then select the culprits from a large crowd, all of whom have to suffer the debasing humiliation of being deprived of their human rights. That is the philosophy behind the Australia Card—let us regiment all our citizens so that we can catch the criminals, perhaps one in 100.

Contrary to this philosophy, my Bill is aimed only towards the criminal in the knowledge and confident anticipation that the Police Force and other law enforcement authorities, given the proper means, will apprehend the criminals. Accordingly, the following are the main provisions of this Bill.

After an interpretation clause, where the most important explanation is made about connected property—which also became the title of the Bill and which is almost identical to the already cited interpretation in the Misuse of Drugs Act 1981—the Bill provides for a search warrant to be granted by a justice of the peace. The JP must be satisfied on “information of oath” that there is reasonable ground to suspect that connected property may be in or on a vehicle, premises or other place. The warrant is valid for 30 days. That search warrant empowers the police officer to search any vehicle, premises or other place, to seize or make extracts from or copies of documents, and to require persons to give information. Non-compliance or giving false information constitutes an offence. Self-incrimination is no excuse not to give information, but cannot be used as evidence against the person giving it.

A further provision is that under reasonable suspicion during the search, police may seize property for 72 hours and, if this time does not appear to be sufficient, apply for a holding order. Alternatively, if the property cannot be seized physically, or the seizure would unfairly affect third persons, the police can apply for an embargo notice. Like the search warrant, the holding order and embargo notice are granted for a limited period of 21 days by a justice of

the peace who must be satisfied that there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the application relates to connected property. The 21-day period can be extended only by the District Court. A copy of the embargo notice must be served to the possessor of the property and/or other connected persons. If the person sells, moves, transfers or otherwise deals with the property affected by an embargo notice, he commits an offence. However, the person to whom the embargo notice relates can apply to the District Court, which can allow the property or part of it to be sold, leased, etc. under conditions set by that court.

The final step in this sequence is that, having satisfactorily completed his investigation, the police officer to whom the holding order or embargo notice has been granted applies to the District Court. After procedural matters regarding this application, the Bill provides that the District Court—being satisfied that the property or part of it is connected property—may order that the property or part of it be forfeited to the Crown, or sold, and the proceeds distributed in the manner specified by the court. Should the District Court not be satisfied that the property or part of it is indeed connected property, it can release the property under holding order or cancel the embargo notice, make any additional orders as the justice of the case requires, and make a decision about costs.

To delay or obstruct the police action, or not to produce, or to conceal any property, is an offence. Offences under the proposed Act are punishable with a fine not exceeding \$3 000 and/or imprisonment not exceeding three years. Finally, the Bill provides for regulatory powers.

I am quite sure that not only will these proposed measures find majority public support, but also, if enacted, will to a great extent reduce profit-motivated crimes. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Pearce (Leader of the House).

SALE OF GOVERNMENT PROPERTY (PARLIAMENTARY APPROVAL) BILL

Second Reading

MR STEPHENS (Stirling) [7.48 pm]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this Bill is to require future Governments to seek parliamentary approval for all major sales of Government property.

The Bill is a positive response to the controversy surrounding last year's sale of the Midland abattoirs and saleyard. Of course, long-serving members will remember that the Midland sale is not the only occasion on which controversy has arisen over the alleged public benefit of a particular Government property sale. However, the Midland sale is likely to be the most prominent in members' minds and, therefore, I urge all members to consider how that sale would have been affected had this Bill been law at the time.

The negotiations with Mr Ellett could have progressed as far as signing the contract without the need to discuss the matter in the public arena. However, and this is the point of the Bill, the contract would have included the proviso "subject to parliamentary approval". At this point the Minister would have been required to make the details of the proposed sale known to Parliament and, therefore, to the general public.

I am sure that few, if any, members believe that the manner in which the Midland sale was scrutinised by two parliamentary Select Committees and by debate in both Houses has left the public satisfied that their best interest was at the centre of the controversy. Members will understand that whichever party is in Government a considerable amount of public property is likely to be sold in the next few years. The potential exists for the type of controversy connected with the Midland sale to be repeated many times.

This Bill will ensure that Governments take the necessary steps when negotiating the sale of public property to ensure that the deal can withstand the closest scrutiny in the public arena. The public will gain because they will have the confidence that none of their major assets will be sold off behind their back.

Further, any attempt by a Government to give preferential treatment to its political friends through favourable property deals will be exposed before it is too late to stop the sale. The Parliament will also gain, as it will have the power of veto on all major sales of public property. The Government will gain because controversies such as the one over the Midland abattoirs sale will not be as politically damaging. Once a sale has been approved by the Parliament, any consequences will be the responsibility of the entire Parliament and not just the Government.

Members are fully aware that Governments cannot appropriate Consolidated Revenue Funds or Loan Funds without the approval of the Parliament. I believe that it is consistent to require Parliament to approve of the sale of any Government property which, in effect, represents the assets of the people held in trust by the Government.

Members will note that the Bill is very simple. Apart from a clause with several definitions, there is only one operative clause. That clause simply states that property of the value of \$250 000 or more cannot be disposed of without the prior approval of Parliament.

I recognise that the Bill does not cover agreements concerning the utilisation of our natural resources. It has become the practice for Governments to seek the approval of Parliament for the ratification of major agreements relating to natural resources, particularly minerals. However, this is not mandatory or due to statutory requirements. I understand that in many instances the private companies involved in the agreements have requested parliamentary ratification, no doubt as added security.

On advice from the parliamentary draftsman, provisions to cover these agreements have been omitted from this Bill. However, to cover such circumstances a Bill is being prepared which I shall introduce at a later date.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Pearce (Leader of the House).

GOVERNMENT UTILITY CHARGES

Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee Inquiry: Motion

MR MacKINNON (Murdoch—Leader of the Opposition) [7.53 pm]: I move—

That the House refers to the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee for examination, consideration and report to the House the justification for the increases in charges for electricity, gas and water imposed in 1986; to the objective that it be the resolution of this House that each year the prices charged by Western Australian Government monopolies should be subject to scrutiny and justification before the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee which

should report to the Assembly and through the Assembly to the public of this State; and having regard to—

- (a) the statements by the Prime Minister and the Premier in 1986 that surveillance of prices in the private sector needed to be increased;
- (b) the action by the State Government to survey in the highly competitive food retail area;
- (c) the failure of price survey mechanisms to reduce prices especially in highly competitive private sector activities;
- (d) the genuine need for some non government body to examine and require price justification for increasing charges by non competitive government monopolies, and
- (e) the genuine need for consumers who have no choice but to use the services provided by government monopolies to be protected from excessive government price increases.

It is most appropriate that the Parliament should debate this motion on the eve of the Government's announcement of the charge increases by the State Government; and it is interesting that the Government is moving well in advance of the normal time to make that announcement. Members will bear in mind that last year the announcements were made two days prior to the end of the financial year. This year they will be made on 4 June, nearly four weeks in advance of the normal time, primarily because of the Federal election round the corner. The State Government wants to minimise the impact the increases will have in terms of electoral damage to the Federal Government.

As I said after the Premiers' Conference, there is no need to increase taxes and charges severely in this year's Budget. We were dealt with most advantageously by the Commonwealth, and so I believe that the increases in charges tomorrow should be in the order of between five and seven per cent. Anything more excessive would clearly not be reasonable, and the Government has a clear responsibility to spell out exactly what it will do in the taxation area ahead of the Federal election.

Let me return to the essential question and the proposal put forward in the motion, that Government monopolies—in this instance the State Energy Commission and the Water Authority of Western Australia—have their in-

creases in charges referred on an annual basis to the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee.

The motion also asks that the charges to be looked at should be the 1986 charges and beyond. We have deliberately left it at the 1986 charges because the Government, following its normal pattern—at least normal in its first three years of office—increased taxes and charges significantly in its first year after the election, and in subsequent years those increases were tapered off. We want an examination of the charges to be made over a three-year period rather than just the last two years of the Government's administration, which the Government, by design, is making sure has a minimum impact in terms of cost increases.

It is interesting to note that the Premier has supported just such an inquiry at the Federal level. In fact on 30 May his comments were reported in *The West Australian* under the headline "Burke backs probe into charges". The Premier welcomed a decision by the Prices Surveillance Authority to conduct an inquiry into all Telecom charges. I quote from the article itself, because it makes very interesting reading. The Premier's comments relating to Telecom could be transposed almost exactly to the SEC and the Water Authority. The article said this—

He said yesterday that the public was worried about the level of Telecom charges and the rationale on which they were based.

Clearly that is the case with the SEC and the Water Authority. I am sure members receive the same sort of inquiries about those charges. The article went on to say—

This worry ranged from basic questions about Telecom's advertising campaigns to more fundamental questions, such as its monopoly of the public-telephone network, he said.

Just think about the Water Authority there. To continue—

"Telecom has consistently maintained that its charges policy is soundly based and designed to provide a cost-efficient service to all Australians," he said.

It has a familiar ring about it. The article continues—

"In that case Telecom should have nothing to fear from an inquiry by the Prices Surveillance Authority."

The Premier is talking about Telecom. The article continues—

Mr Burke said, the authority's inquiry would provide Telecom with an opportunity to justify its charge structure and perhaps improve its image in the general community.

I agree wholeheartedly with the Premier's comments. It is not often that an Opposition Leader agrees totally with the Premier, but in this instance I do. Government monopolies, as the Premier says, should have nothing to fear from an inquiry by the Prices Surveillance Authority. If the Premier is fair, what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. What is fair for a Commonwealth monopoly should be fair for a State monopoly.

We want, therefore, by this motion to refer these charges, starting from 1986 onwards, to the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee. Can it be done? The answer to that is clearly yes. The member for Albany will outline the authority under which the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee could investigate this area. It has the power; it has the resources.

Is it costly? Would it be as costly as Price Watch to maintain a watch on price increases by the SEC and the WAWA? Would it cost \$250 000 to do that through our Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee? I put it to you, Mr Speaker, that the answer is no.

If, as this motion indicates, one has Price Watch for the private sector—a highly competitive private sector in terms of supermarket activities—then surely it is reasonable to have a Price Watch or similar surveillance over Government monopolies, an area where the public has no choice whatsoever but to go to the Government for that particular service.

It is the responsibility of the Opposition to justify that there is a need for such an inquiry. I put some statistics to the House which I believe support that proposal. The first is an interstate comparison of electricity charges to see whether Western Australians really have need for concern in this area. A recent inquiry by the Victorian State Electricity Commission published and released this year showed that domestic energy costs for electricity in Western Australia are higher than in the other States. It showed that for every \$100 spent here in electricity, residents in Melbourne paid \$75; in Adelaide, \$77; in Brisbane, \$80—

Mr Parker: That is assuming consumption is of the same order, which it is not.

Mr MacKINNON: In Sydney, \$63; in Hobart, \$78.

Mr Parker: You are being quite dishonest.

Mr MacKINNON: What the Minister is trying to say to me and to members is that the weather in Sydney—or in Adelaide, for that matter—is so markedly different that people use significantly lesser amounts of electricity. I have been to both those places and I do not find them to be very different places to live in.

Mr Troy: What about the alternative energy sources they have?

Mr MacKINNON: What about Sydney and Adelaide: The figures show \$100 in Western Australia; \$63 in Sydney; \$77 in Adelaide. They are cities that I would have thought are very comparable to Perth, Western Australia.

Mr Parker: The fact of the position is that—

Mr MacKINNON: What the Minister is saying by his interjection is that he will not agree to an independent assessment of the State Energy Commission's charging policies.

Mr Parker: Do you think that—

Mr MacKINNON: The Minister does not agree with that. I will answer the Minister's question when he answers mine. Does he agree with an independent assessment of the State Energy Commission's pricing policies?

Mr Parker: The first point I make is that the figures reveal, contrary to what you have asserted—

Mr MacKINNON: The Minister is not going to answer the question.

Mr Parker: If you listen, I will answer the question.

Mr MacKINNON: The Minister has the opportunity of speaking when he wants to, instead of wasting my time. It is the Government that does not like the answers: \$100 spent here; \$77 spent in Adelaide; \$63 spent in Sydney.

It is even worse on the industrial front. The Minister is supposed to have some responsibility for industry. For every \$1 000 spent in Perth, businesses in Melbourne pay \$568; Adelaide, \$795; Brisbane, \$648; Hobart, \$585; Sydney, \$784.

Mr Cash: There is no comment now from the Minister.

Mr Parker: No. Western Australia is by no means the most expensive State. Those figures reveal it is quite cheap.

Mr MacKINNON: People come to members of the Opposition and complain. If the Minister doubts what the Opposition is saying, I refer

him to his own State Energy Commission's publication, and I will seek the permission of the House to incorporate this graph in *Hansard* at the end of my speech. The source is the SEC's annual report for 1985-86, which shows that until the year ending June 1983 electricity prices increased below the rate of inflation.

Mr Parker: That is nonsense.

Mr MacKINNON: Since the election of this Government, electricity prices have been above the rate of inflation. What the Minister is saying is that his own commission published nonsense.

Mr Parker: That is untrue.

Mr MacKINNON: He is saying that the commission published nonsense.

Mr Parker: I am not. What I am saying is that you are talking nonsense.

Mr MacKINNON: It is not my graph; it is the commission's graph.

Mr Parker: You are talking nonsense. You are telling untruths to the House. You are lying to the House.

Mr MacKINNON: It is the commission's graph.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr WATT: The words used by the Minister are unparliamentary and should be withdrawn.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Burkett): I request the Minister for Minerals and Energy to withdraw the reference that the Leader of the Opposition was in fact lying.

Mr PARKER: In deference to you and your position, I will withdraw those comments. The Leader of the Opposition was simply saying untrue things to the House, but I accept your ruling on this matter.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I do not need those interjections. As I said earlier, I will not issue warnings, and during the debate, with due respect to the Leader of the Opposition, I think it is fair communication for the speaker on his feet to invite comments from the Minister and for the Minister to reply; but if other people interjecting when a member is apologising on a withdrawal of remarks I do not need and I will not tolerate it.

Debate Resumed

Mr MacKINNON: The words the Minister had to withdraw referred to his own annual report, tabled in this Parliament; not to mine.

Mr Parker: You are being dishonest in the way in which you are interpreting it.

Mr MacKINNON: If we are talking about statistics, let us look at what the Treasurer says. The Treasurer keeps pointing to the Australian Bureau of Statistics data on selected State and local government charges, saying, as he did during the by-elections, that it showed bigger increases under the Liberals. I challenge the Treasurer to indicate whether those statistics he continually referred to covered such things as the State fuel tax, payroll tax, the tobacco tax, liquor tax, FID, and car registration fees. They did not, of course. Any objective analysis will show, expressed in 1986-87 dollars, an annual rate of tax per head increase in this State of \$15 in the last four years of the Liberal Government compared with \$124 per head over these past years of the Labor Government—more than eight times greater.

Mr Parker: You are the people that put the SEC tariffs up by 25 per cent in one year.

Mr MacKINNON: I just refer the Minister, who keeps interjecting, to that particular graph.

Mr Parker: Do you deny you put SEC tariffs up by 25 per cent in one year?

Mr MacKINNON: That is amazing. It is one of the few times I have ever seen a Minister in this House publicly disown his own commission.

Let members have a look at what we are in for this year in terms of increases in taxes and charges and at what the Treasurer has said and how honest he is in terms of his commitment. I refer the House back to last week when the Opposition pressed the Treasurer in this House on the question of what would happen this year in terms of taxes and charges. The Treasurer said—

As I have said repeatedly, the Government will not increase any tax or charge by any figure exceeding the inflation rate.

That is a pretty important statement. The Treasurer used those words; not me. The Treasurer also said—

The Government will also endeavour to restrain increases below the rate and hopefully, in some cases, to meet the target set by the Leader of the Opposition. We might be able to not increase some particular taxes and charges at all.

Let us have a look at what this Government has done already. The Treasurer made that statement knowing that in the area of boat ownership fees, the increases this year ranged from 35 per cent to 163 per cent.

Mr Troy: What does that mean in dollar terms?

Mr MacKINNON: Here we have the Minister for Transport disowning his own Treasurer.

Mr Troy: What do the figures mean in dollar terms?

Mr MacKINNON: I remind the Minister of what the Treasurer said. He said, "As I have said repeatedly, the Government will not increase any tax or charge by any figure exceeding the inflation rate." That statement was not qualified in any way.

The inflation rate is certainly not anywhere near 163 per cent, and the Minister for Transport can do all the verbal gymnastics he likes. The next thing he will say is that it is our fault—that is normally the first explanation. The second is usually that there has been an increase in the level of economic activity. Perhaps he will say that is why boat registration charges have gone up by 163 per cent.

Mr Parker: You are the most dishonest person who has ever sat in that chair in this House.

Mr MacKINNON: Let me repeat what I have said because the Minister for Minerals and Energy seems to be hard of hearing.

Mr Parker: I am not hard of hearing.

Mr MacKINNON: The Treasurer said in this House last Thursday, "As I have said repeatedly, the Government will not increase any tax or charge by any figure exceeding the inflation rate." That is a pretty categorical and clear statement. He did not say "in most cases".

Mr Troy: When did he say that?

Mr MacKINNON: Last Thursday.

Mr Troy: And when did the boat registration charges go up?

Mr MacKINNON: Why did the Treasurer make the statement knowing that Cabinet had approved this increase already? The charges became effective on 1 May.

Mr Troy: That is exactly my point.

Mr MacKINNON: He is talking about charges applying this year. The Treasurer came into this House and made a statement which was not true, knowing he and his colleagues

had participated in a decision-making process in Cabinet to increase charges by more than inflation in at least one area.

Mr Parker: Are you seriously suggesting that the general public are affected by that?

Mr MacKINNON: That is not the only area of increase. Let us look at the increases in fishing licence fees.

Mr Parker: Fishing licence fees! A very important and fundamental area of Government.

Mr Court: It is to the people concerned.

Mr MacKINNON: Does the Minister for Minerals and Energy not believe that an export industry worth over \$100 million to this State is important?

Mr Parker: I did not say that. Did I say that?

Mr MacKINNON: The Minister for Minerals and Energy said the fishing industry is not important to Western Australia.

Mr Parker: You are a very dishonest man.

Mr MacKINNON: That is what he said. Members should look at this Minister, who seems to follow the lead of his leader. Limited entry fishing licence fees in Nickol Bay have increased by 128 per cent.

Mr Court: And the Minister says, "Who does that affect?"

Mr MacKINNON: Prawn fishing fees have risen by 50 per cent in Shark Bay and by 33 per cent in Exmouth, and licence fees for limited entry fishing for rock lobster in zones A to E have been increased by 18 per cent; yet the Minister for Minerals and Energy says the fishing industry is not important to Western Australia.

Mr Parker: I did not say that.

Mr MacKINNON: "We do not care about that." That is what the Minister said; that is definitely what he implied.

Mr Parker: What an absolutely dishonest statement.

Mr MacKINNON: Let us consider the fishing licence fees for people on the south coast. The member for Albany would be vitally interested in what happens to the people down there. Those fees have risen by 38 per cent, and on the south-west coast by 71 per cent. It was not I who raised these fees. The fee is to apply from 1 July 1987 in all cases; yet what did the Treasurer say? He said, "As I have said repeatedly, the Government will not increase any tax or charge by any figure exceeding the inflation rate." Already he has gone back on his word in

two important cases, and if the Minister for Minerals and Energy does not believe the fishing industry is important—

Mr Parker: I do; I have said it is important. Most of it is in my constituency.

Mr MacKINNON: It does not seem to have a very high priority of importance in the area of fees. It seems the Minister for Minerals and Energy wants to mislead this House, just like the Treasurer—

Mr Parker: You are misleading the House.

Mr MacKINNON: —and just like the Minister for Labour, Productivity and Employment, who I think is also the Minister assisting the Treasurer in some areas. Let us have a look at his correct title. It is right at the bottom of the page—he could not get elected further up. He is the Minister assisting the Treasurer, so he should have known some of the facts, but what did he say on the Howard Sattler show on 25 May when questioned about taxes and charges? This is what Mr Dowding said in response to a question from a listener—

The fact is that State taxes and charges have been increased at below inflation level since we have been in office.

Mr Williams: That is a blatant untruth.

Mr MacKINNON: Would members believe that? The mind boggles!

Mr Parker: Are you seriously suggesting that in every single area of Government charges, even those areas where a community resource is at stake, and the cost of the provision of that resource is higher, those charges should be related to the CPI?

Mr MacKINNON: I would have thought that if the Treasurer made a statement in this Parliament I should be able to take him at his word, as should the people of Western Australia. And if a Minister of the Crown spoke on radio and makes a statement to the people of Western Australia saying, "The fact is that State taxes and charges have been increased at below inflation level since we have been in office," we should be able to take him at his word.

The Minister for Minerals and Energy is totally irresponsible. For example, last year we saw electricity and gas charges rise by 12 per cent. Was that below the inflation rate?

Mr Parker: We will deal with that; we will sheet home the responsibility for it.

Mr MacKINNON: There were increases of 20 per cent for hospital services; and perhaps the Minister for Labour, Productivity and Em-

ployment had a bit of a mental block and forgot about the fuel tax when he spoke on radio. He must have simply forgotten that the fuel tax rose by 92 per cent last year, yet he is a Minister representing country electors, upon whom the fuel tax falls hardest.

The tax on fuel did not rise by 92 per cent because of the increased level of economic activity, and it was not our fault—he could not blame us for that. It was his own statement; his own commitment. Therefore, when we hear these misleading statements—from the Treasurer, from the Minister for Minerals and Energy tonight, and from the Minister assisting the Treasurer on public radio—totally misleading the public, members can understand why we believe that in these crucial areas of Government monopoly there should be some independent assessment made of the taxes and charges.

After tomorrow, when I predict that Western Australian families will be about \$4 per week worse off than they are today because of these increases, members will understand also why we want those increases to be referred to an independent inquiry.

Mr Parker: When did you have a single year in the entire time of the Court and O'Connor Governments in which the charges rose only by the rate of inflation?

Mr MacKINNON: The Minister for Minerals and Energy is following the lead that the Minister for Police and Emergency Services is giving him as the lemming jumping over the cliff. He says, "What did you do? It was your fault." Was it our fault that the fuel tax rose by 92 per cent last year?

Mr Cash: No comment.

Mr MacKINNON: There is a stunned silence from the Government benches. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services is smiling. We will see him smile on the other side of his face when a few facts emerge over the next few days about his maladministration of his department. He will be the last person sitting opposite to have a smug smile on his face.

The motion should be supported in total. We believe the fees should be looked at from 1986 on and not from this year because 1986 was the first year after the last election. Taxes and charges increased dramatically. Fuel increased by 92 per cent and liquor tax increased significantly. We will see during this and next year a tapering off of those increases. If there were to be an independent assessment of the Government's activities it should have

begun in 1986. The Premier has been on record from 30 May as saying that Commonwealth monopolies should be open to independent inquiry and that consumers would have much more confidence in those monopolies should an investigation take place. What is good for Telecom should be good enough for the State Energy Commission and the Metropolitan Water Authority. Does the Premier not believe his statements relating to Telecom also apply to the WAWA and the SEC? From the Premier's lack of a reply, it seems there is much more interest in stamps these days than facts and figures in relation to the public of Western Australia and the referral of important matters to the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee in relation to the actions of the State Government in putting its resources into surveying a highly competitive food area, the failure of the price survey mechanism, and the genuine need for a non-Government body to require and examine price justification.

I refer to part (d) of the statement which is directly in line with the Premier's statement relating to Telecom. The need is genuine because consumers have no choice but to use the services provided by Government monopolies. Those are the Premier's own words on Telecom, words which are ringing loudly in our ears. The motion should be supported. Any Government which shies away from this fails to be accountable. Why should the Government shy away from such an independent assessment? The Government may say we have no policies or that we are shallow, but we have already given a commitment that our taxes and charges will be announced well before they are implemented and the public will be invited to comment. This will not just happen before an election as is the case this year with the Premier's bringing in his taxes and charges because there is a Federal election in the air. We will review public comment prior to making a final decision on what implementation will be made in terms of taxes and charges.

We will not publicly shy away from any independent scrutiny of WAWA or SEC charges. We invite that scrutiny to ensure the proper administration and discipline of those agencies. The facts speak for themselves. The Premier's commitment to this House was crystal clear last Thursday and unqualified in any way. It will be interesting to see how often over the next month or so he goes back on his commitment.

Mr Brian Burke: What commitment was that?

Mr MacKINNON: If the Premier is not here to listen to the debate I am not going to repeat it. He made a commitment last Thursday. When he has the courtesy to come and listen to a debate, I might repeat it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Under Standing Order 115, the Leader of the Opposition seeks leave to incorporate a graph in *Hansard*. If I hear one dissentient voice, leave will not be granted.

Leave not granted.

MR WATT (Albany) [8.25 pm]: That has to be one of the most unprecedented moves I have heard in the time I have been in this Parliament.

Mr Parker: That was because you were out of the Chamber a lot when you were in Government. It happened all the time. It was a routine procedure.

Mr WATT: Absolute rubbish! I think the Government has just made its position worse.

I am happy to second the motion and in doing so I suggest the Government should support the motion. It could only have one of three possible reasons to oppose it. The first reason may simply be to be perverse, the second may be because the Government has something to hide, and the third may be quite genuine because it feels that the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee may be an inappropriate body to act in the capacity that has been recommended by this motion.

Whichever party is in Government, there will always be a need for the public to have an avenue of protection in the form of public scrutiny to protect their interests. There are many different forms of Government operation in place throughout Australia to keep a surveillance over prices or give approval to price-setting mechanisms. The best example is the Prices Surveillance Authority which operates under the umbrella of the Federal Parliament. The Leader of the Opposition made reference to statements made by the Premier on the role the Prices Surveillance Authority might play in reviewing proposed increases for Telecom charges. I think that was an excellent example. I support the role of the Prices Surveillance Authority in that area.

There are other examples. The Trade Practices Commission sometimes takes an overview of the operations of some business activities, particularly commercial activities. We have, in this State, the Consumer Affairs Department which has an overview of certain business operations. There are many private enterprise or-

organisations which are also bound by Government surveillance on charges they make. The best example is that of fuel prices. The price of petroleum products in this State in recent times has been a matter of considerable debate and concern. I do not think anyone would argue against the appropriateness of the Prices Surveillance Authority having an overview of and an authority over charges made for petroleum products. I do not think anyone argues about the importance of petroleum products as they affect our lives.

Another example is that of nursing homes. The fees charged by nursing homes have to be approved by the Department of Social Security. Their fees have to be justified before any price increase can take effect. Even that has flaws because the approval has been so tardy in coming that when price rises are approved they are higher than they ought to have been. That has caused a considerable problem for many residents in nursing homes. We saw that happen recently in Narrogin where nursing home residents did not know how they would manage to pay their bills.

There are many other professional bodies that have fees which are either set or approved by Government agencies. Whichever party is in Government, there will always be resistance from the Opposition of the day or from the public to the rate at which fees, charges, and taxes are being increased by the Government of the day.

Mr Parker: Do you recall when you were Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee and I was the Deputy Chairman, and we tried as minority members of that committee to examine the accounts of the SEC. You and your committee stopped us doing that.

Mr WATT: I am quite happy to talk about that.

Mr Brian Burke: He has caught you out again.

Mr WATT: It is not a matter of stopping it; but I will come to that at the end of my speech.

The Leader of the Opposition has already mentioned that the Treasurer will announce tomorrow some of the taxes and charges which are to be increased. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that we should support this motion, but the Government has tried to impose a form of price surveillance, or at least price monitoring, on supermarkets. In my opinion, and in the opinion of the majority of the people, this surveillance is simply not needed where there is plenty of competition and where

there are market pressures which ensure that nobody can charge more than an absolute minimum for particular goods without putting themselves out of business.

On the other hand the Government has no check on need, no competition, and no market pressures to justify its position whereby taxes and charges are increased from time to time. It is rather interesting to contemplate the possibility that Governments may also be—and I am sure have been in the past—guilty of keeping prices artificially low at certain times. When an authority such as the Prices Surveillance Authority or indeed the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee makes public the fact that the pressures would have justified a higher increase, and that while it could not tell the Government what to do it felt it to be appropriate to lift charges higher than they actually should be in view of proper inflationary trends, that is why there exists a need for this motion.

By its own admission the Government has seen the cost of living increase, and that is why it has imposed on the community \$250 000-worth of price checking. The Federal Government has a variety of price surveillance activities and there are many references to that. I have mentioned petroleum products and the like.

The reference to fuel prices is a perfect example because this single item affects our daily lives in diverse ways, such as transport for goods and services of almost every type—personal transport, public transport, freight on goods, and even power supplies in many areas.

The items referred to in this motion—gas, electricity, and water charges—affect everybody right across the spectrum of society, whether they be housewives, pensioners, or large corporations and businesses, manufacturing or retailing.

When I spoke in the Address-in-Reply debate I talked about the Price Check scheme. I mentioned that one supermarket chain told me that it had to pay an extra \$300 000 last year in electricity charges because of electricity increases. All of that has to be passed on to the consumer. Every item on a supermarket shelf is affected by one of the three items which are referred to in this motion. All supermarkets, whether large or small, will be affected.

I thought it was very telling that the Retail Traders Association recently ran a full-page advertisement under the very bold heading "Whose prices really need watching?"

Mr MacKinnon: See if you can have that incorporated in *Hansard*.

Mr WATT: I think it tells its own story because it mentioned that in Western Australia between 1981 and 1986 food prices rose by 52.5 per cent, while the inflation rate rose by 56 per cent; but in that same period Government charges rose by various amounts. The total tax take is up by 67.7 per cent, and a variety of other charges, which the Leader of the Opposition cited, were well above the inflation rate. Another article in the *Daily News* of 7 April 1987 ran the heading "Government charges the 'real' bill", and read in part as follows—

Food eats up only one dollar in five of average household expenditure. Critics of the government-run price watches have said our taxes could be better spent looking at prices for goods and services bought with the other \$4.

It went on to list a whole range of Government taxes and charges, all of which have gone up by quite extraordinary amounts, and which all affect householders. That particular article cited Australian Bureau of Statistics figures which show—

...average male weekly total earnings have gone up from \$283.10 to \$499.40 in the same period—an increase of 76 per cent.

Since 1983, when this Government took office, food prices rose by 26 per cent; the consumer price index rose by 31 per cent, and total State taxation rose by 81 per cent. Several other taxes and charges listed show that increases have been well over 100 per cent in this period.

Many small items, which may not seem terribly significant to members of the Government—and indeed when the Leader of the Opposition cited some of those figures, they guffawed and carried on as though they were not significant at all—are important when taken in the context of other increases. For example, business registration fees were raised on 1 October 1986; such increases are constantly occurring and they all have an effect on business operations. Under the old scale of charges, which was a sliding scale, groups of one to two paid \$12; three to five, \$24; six to 10, \$48, and so on. Fees are now determined on the basis of the number of people employed on the premises, including the occupiers. Incidentally, a husband and wife counted as one person.

Under the new scale of charges, there is a registration fee of \$6 plus \$5 per employee. A business which employs 10 people would have paid \$48 under the old scale, but under the new scale it would pay \$56. That is only up 16½ per cent. However, a business employing 100 people would pay \$506 under the new scale as opposed to \$300 under the old.

Mr Parker: Do you think that will have an impact? A difference of \$200? That is ridiculous and insane.

Mr WATT: That is an indication of the mentality of this Government. It tries to say that because the amount is relatively small, it is unimportant.

Mr Parker: Are you saying that an increase from \$300 to \$500 is a big increase? That is \$200 a year. Don't be ridiculous.

Mr WATT: I am saying that there are people and businesses having the blood wrung out of them. That extra couple of hundred dollars being wrung out of them is important to them.

Mr MacKinnon: We would be interested to tell business people that the Government says it does not mind their paying extra money.

Mr WATT: It is interesting that this particular price increase was brought to my attention by the operator of a small supermarket. He was concerned about this increase and a whole range of other increases which have been forced on him. He will be interested to learn that the Minister thinks his concern is not sane.

Mr Taylor: Do you think the sorts of fees in the real estate industry, for example, where they believe there should be certain restrictions so the industry is well regulated, should go towards the cost of regulation of the industry, or should the industry be subsidised by the taxpayers?

Mr WATT: I am not sure what point the Minister is trying to make. I am saying that collectively all these taxes and charges are constantly being increased. This motion applies to three essential services. I was trying to make the point that although the motion only addresses three items, there is a very wide range of services in the community, some of which I accept would be too small in general application to refer to the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee.

One of the items in the motion is electricity, and the Leader of the Opposition has quoted figures and tables to show that Western Australia, by comparison with other States, has a very high tariff for electricity charges.

Mr Parker: Has that relationship changed in recent years?

Mr WATT: The Minister did not hear what I said earlier. I am trying to make the point that irrespective of who is in Government there will always be increases in various tariffs and prices, appropriately at times. The public are entitled to know that some independent body is looking after their interests by inquiring into the appropriateness of those prices. Do not tell me that when the Opposition is elected to Government and Government members are sitting on these benches they will not be very happy when the boot is on the other foot and they see an independent group of people examining these things.

Mr Taylor: Of course you would not be happy.

Mr WATT: Of course Government members would.

Mr Taylor: We tried to do that and you would not let us.

Mr Parker: You were the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee who refused permission for the committee to look at the SEC.

Mr WATT: Let me finish my speech and I will be happy to talk about that.

Despite all that has been said about Price Check and its success in bringing down food prices, it was reported in the *Daily News* of 13 May under the heading "No change at your supermarket"—I do not think that means no change in one's pocket and that there will be no change out of a \$50 or \$100 bill—

Local grocery prices are fairly consistent, says the government's watchdog.

After more than three months of scrutinising local supermarket shelves, this is the finding of the \$250 000 Price Check.

Further on it says—

We have seen prices remain pretty consistent, with a number of staple items on special in some stores.

The price watch's basket was changed again for this survey—the third change since the survey started.

But this time it was the weighting of the individual items that changed—to reflect the changes in consumer habits...

Food prices obviously have remained fairly constant, despite the Government and not because of it, and despite the fact there have been many cost impositions in a variety of areas, whether small or large.

We have been talking about whether the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee is an appropriate body, to examine these price increases. The Minister for Minerals and Energy mentioned an occasion—and he is quite correct—when I was Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. I must say that for much of the time I was chairman the committee was frustrated by the Standing Orders under which it operated and the adequacy of those Standing Orders in allowing it to delve into some of the things we would have liked to examine. I regret to say that although for most of the time I was involved with the Public Accounts Committee, as it was then called, we enjoyed an exceptionally good working relationship and there was a very bipartisan approach to most things we tried to do—

Mr Parker: But not including trying to scrutinise the SEC, because you and your colleagues said to us in so many words you could not scrutinise it because you had been told you were not allowed to.

Mr WATT: I never said that in so many words.

Mr Parker: It was pretty clear.

Mr WATT: The truth is an approach was made to the SEC, and the Minister of the day wrote back to the committee. I do not claim any responsibility or comment favourably or unfavourably, but at the time, whether we wanted to or not, the Standing Orders of the Public Accounts Committee were not strong enough to allow us to pursue that matter further.

Mr Parker: That is not true.

Mr WATT: It is true. It is the reason why the rest of the committee and I decided to pursue a review of the Standing Orders under which the committee met.

Mr Parker: That is not true. You and your conservative colleagues on the committee outvoted me and my Labor colleague and refused us permission to scrutinise the SEC.

Mr WATT: There were good reasons at the time why that was done.

Mr Parker: There may have been, but it was done.

Mr Gordon Hill: They were political.

Mr WATT: It is interesting that the Minister for Police and Emergency Services has said they were political. To my knowledge, he did not serve on the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr Gordon Hill: Yes, I did, very briefly.

Mr WATT: I do not recollect that, but it is not the point. Had he done so I think he would have agreed that we tried to keep things as non-party political as possible.

Mr Parker: I agree. With one exception that was the case, but the SEC was the exception.

Mr WATT: A review of the Standing Orders under which the Public Accounts Committee operated also involved a change of name to the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee. In the process of bringing about those changes we researched the Standing Orders of all the other public accounts committees, or their equivalent, operating in Federal and State Parliaments.

Mr Parker: I did a paper on it.

Mr WATT: Lots of people made an input. I cannot remember specifically who did, but it was a very useful exercise.

The Standing Orders we now have enable that committee to be much wider in its scope than it was previously. Standing Order No. 412 (1) says—

The functions of the Committee shall be to inquire into, consider and report to the Parliament on any proposal, matter or thing connected with the receipt and expenditure of public moneys, including moneys allocated under the Annual Appropriation Bills and the Loan Fund.

In my view that would permit the committee quite adequately to accept this motion.

The next Standing Order which I consider relevant is more specific. It says—

The Committee shall be empowered—

(d) to inquire into, and report to the Assembly on any question which—

(ii) is referred to it by a resolution of the Assembly;

So if the Assembly passes this motion and refers these items to the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee, clearly it would be perfectly proper for that committee to examine them.

The final Standing Order which I regard as appropriate is No. 412(2)(h) which says—

The Committee shall be empowered—

(h) to consider whether the objectives of public expenditure are being achieved or may be achieved more economically.

Again I think that would be an appropriate matter for the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee to discuss.

There is no question that the public have a very cynical and sceptical view of Governments when it comes to increased taxes and charges. There is no doubt that they feel suspicion about the reasons, the timing, and the extent to which taxes and charges are increased. There is no doubt that the three items mentioned in this motion—electricity, gas, and water—are absolutely vital to almost every aspect of human endeavour in this State, whether personal, social, household, business, large or small—and we are all affected by them and they are very important to us.

The motion refers specifically to statements made by the Prime Minister that surveillance of prices in the private sector needs to be increased. It is not fair to say that one section of the community which already has intense competition needs to have increased surveillance of prices while another section which has no competition gets away scot free.

The motion refers also to the failure of price surveillance mechanisms to reduce prices, especially in highly competitive private sector activities. The activities covered by the motion—electricity, gas, and water charges—have no competition. Clearly with that lack of competition there is a perception in the minds of the public at least that inefficiencies exist and that charges are not kept at the level at which they would be kept were there some genuine competition or some checking or surveillance of those prices.

All in all, I think the case has been amply proved. I believe that, if the motion were passed, Western Australia would benefit. It would be done on a continuing basis by the Government of the day, not just by this Government or this Opposition in Government. Politics in Australia have a habit of operating in a pendulum-like way because Governments change every few years. The public remain the same throughout those changes and are entitled to the same protection.

I think the motion is commendable and I support it.

MR PARKER (Fremantle—Minister for Minerals and Energy) [8.53 pm]: The first matter I wish to raise in replying to this motion is not fundamental to it but relates to another issue which many of us have observed while watching the antics of the Opposition and the way it deals with particular matters.

Over the past few weeks, I have received questions almost every day from the Opposition spokesman on my portfolio areas and

almost identical questions on notice from the member for Cottesloe. I have mentioned this to one or two of my colleagues in Cabinet and I understand the same applies to them. It has also been interesting to note that in speeches on motions before the House the member for Cottesloe carefully allows his leaders to make their speeches and then positions himself a speech or two behind to make a speech which I must acknowledge is generally better than that made by his leaders. On occasions, the member for Cottesloe has moved motions without the knowledge of his leader, and one example of that was a motion relating to you, Mr Speaker.

It is also interesting to note that on this occasion the motion was proposed by the member for Cottesloe but was actually moved by the Leader of the Opposition. My understanding of these matters is limited. I am not sure how these things occur. I comment on them only because I think it is of interest to the House to note for the record the antics of the Opposition.

With regard to this motion, the basic and fundamental issue raised by the Opposition is that it believes that the two major statutory authorities, the State Energy Commission and the Water Authority of Western Australia, should submit their charge increases to the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee for examination.

I want to place on the record what happened during the term of the member for Albany as chairman of that committee between 1980 and 1983. I was deputy chairman for a part of that time. As these matters go, there were three Government members and two Opposition members on the committee. Shortly after the member for Kalgoorlie, as he then was, made his magnificent entry into this place in 1981, we identified the SEC's borrowings as an issue that we should explore. The member for Kalgoorlie and I were concerned about the level of that borrowing.

Mr Taylor: The same happened with the water supply.

Mr PARKER: Yes, but I will deal with the SEC first.

Mr Watt: You were shadow Minister for both of those areas at the time.

Mr PARKER: No, I was not. I was the shadow Minister in charge of the water supply. The member for Esperance-Dundas was shadow Minister for the SEC.

The member for Kalgoorlie and I were concerned at that time about the level of SEC borrowing.

Mr MacKinnon: Blame your predecessors.

Mr PARKER: I am not blaming anyone. I am revealing historical facts. I am enjoying myself and am happy to continue enjoying myself. Even though these matters are not of tremendous importance, they do have historical value.

The member for Kalgoorlie and I were concerned that there should be some scrutiny, not of how the SEC was run or how it charged, but of how it borrowed and the level and rate of its borrowing. Since I have been Minister for Minerals and Energy in charge of the SEC, I have revealed the detail of the SEC's borrowing for the first time. It was not revealed during the time of the previous Government. It has become apparent that the level of the SEC's borrowing was of great concern to everybody.

I first wish to deal with one issue. In 1981 when the member for Kalgoorlie and I were raising the matter of the SEC's borrowing, the SEC borrowed in excess of \$A100 million in Japanese yen. Due to a combination of factors, including the appreciation of the artificially high Australian dollar, kept artificially high by the Government of the day and acknowledged to be kept artificially high by all financial commentators, and the appreciation of the Japanese yen which was kept artificially low by the Japanese Government, the debt increased from \$100 million in 1981 to \$250 million. It is small wonder that, at the time, the member for Kalgoorlie and I—almost to the day that those negotiations were taking place—were calling for some scrutiny of the SEC's borrowing activities. It is also small wonder that the Minister of the day who has now departed this place, courtesy of the previous member for Narrogin, told his political colleagues on the committee that on no account should they allow the committee to scrutinise even that one small area of activity of the SEC.

The member for Albany is quite right when he tells the House that, in general terms, during his currency as chairman—I was deputy chairman for only a short period that he was chairman—the committee operated on a bipartisan basis—except for two occasions.

I pay tribute to the way in which the member for Albany chaired the committee for the two or three years I was a member of it and was his deputy. On the occasion to which I have referred, it became very clear indeed that nothing would move heaven or earth to allow that com-

mittee to investigate the borrowing activities of the State Energy Commission. The reason was that the Government of the day had told the member for Albany, the member for Moore—I cannot remember who was the third Liberal Party member of the committee—

Mr Blaikie: I think it was the then member for Mundaring.

Mr PARKER: I had forgotten that. It was the person who is now the Secretary of the Liberal Party! The Government had told the three members of the Liberal Party on the committee that they were not to allow, under any circumstance, the Public Accounts Committee to scrutinise the borrowing activities of the SEC.

Mr Watt: The committee did write to the SEC—

Mr PARKER: Or to the Minister.

Mr Watt: —and it made no decision about whether to pursue the SEC. The SEC and the Minister wrote back to the committee and challenged the committee's right to pursue its activities under the committee's Standing Orders.

Mr PARKER: At the time the member for Kalgoorlie and I tried to move a motion to override that. One problem was the Standing Orders of the committee. They were in need of review, and they were reviewed.

Mr Watt interjected.

Mr PARKER: There is no doubt that the committee had the right to pursue that question.

Mr Watt: I accept that.

Mr PARKER: It is true that the committee's Standing Orders were inadequate, and it is also true that they were subsequently reviewed—

Mr Watt: And changed.

Mr PARKER: —and changed by the Labor Government. What is also true is that at that time the member for Kalgoorlie and I sought to override that decision, but we were defeated by the conservative majority of the committee.

Mr Watt: What about telling us about the motion?

Mr PARKER: I am going to do that. My experience in the eight years I have been in this place is that debates in this House are not always of great relevance, but sometimes they are of relevance and it is useful for history that the facts should be placed on the record.

The point is that the Government of the day, through its elected representatives on the Public Accounts Committee, and the stalling tac-

tics—which have been acknowledged by the member for Albany—by the Government of the day and the Minister of the day—who is no longer a member of Parliament and is making more money in the private sector—decided that the Public Accounts Committee would not be given permission to scrutinise one limited area of activity of the SEC. History has shown that perhaps it should have decided to undertake that scrutiny.

Mr Watt: Do you believe in Standing Orders? The committee could do it now.

Mr PARKER: If the current Chairman of the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee wrote to me and advised me that the committee would like to examine a particular area of activity within my portfolio, I would contrast the experience the committee had with the SEC and the then Minister of the day with the experience it had with the member who sits next to the member for Albany, the member for Dale. At that time we were examining harbours and rivers. The then Minister for Transport came before the committee and gave it all sorts of information. He was quite frank about his plans. It certainly was a contrast. I would be available to meet with the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee, the Chairman, who is the member for Mitchell, and with any other member of the committee. I think the member for Albany is still on that committee.

Mr Watt: No, I am not. That is why I am supporting the motion.

Mr PARKER: The attitude of the member for Albany was very different when he was Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr Watt: That is not true.

Mr PARKER: The member for Albany's personal attitude might have been different.

Mr Watt: The attitudes of the SEC and the Minister of the day were different.

Mr PARKER: The member for Albany may personally not have agreed with the decision, but he went along with the Government of the day and refused the committee the opportunity to debate an issue concerning the SEC. It may not have been his personal view, but he accepted the view of his party.

If the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee wishes me to speak with it—as did the member for Dale when he was Minister for Transport—I am perfectly happy to do so. If the committee wants to look at the SEC's

borrowing activities and the way the SEC manages its foreign exchange, it is now on the record that I would be prepared to do that.

I understand that the member for Mitchell, in his capacity as Chairman of the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee, has written to the SEC asking for various information. I understand also that that information has been provided or has been referred to me to obtain the information concerned.

Let us get down to the issue of electricity charges levied by the SEC. I understand that tomorrow the Treasurer will announce the charges that the Government has agreed to so far as the major statutory authorities are concerned, and discussion on that should await until that time.

By way of comparison, I will detail the average rate of increase during the time that the Leader of the Opposition was a Minister—I am not talking about the entirety of the Liberal Opposition's tenancy of the Government benches, but I will refer to the year that it increased SEC charges by 25 per cent. In the last three years the Liberal Party was in Government, the Leader of the Opposition was the Minister for Industrial, Commercial and Regional Development for a good part of that time—it is an important portfolio in any Government's terms—and the average increase in electricity charges was 15.3 per cent. The average increase in electricity charges during this Government's tenancy of office has been 8.5 per cent. It is a fact, and no-one can argue about it.

In relation to the increase in gas charges in the last three years in the Liberal Party's term in Government, the average increase was 16.5 per cent; and since the Labor Party has been in Government the average increase has been 8.5 per cent.

An Opposition member: Have you compared the graph?

Mr PARKER: Is the Leader of the Opposition denying what I have said?

Mr MacKinnon: I am not denying it.

Mr PARKER: The Leader of the Opposition does not deny that during the time he was the Minister for Industrial, Commercial and Regional Development in this State, and when he was supposed to be promoting competitiveness and all those sorts of things in the State, the average increase in electricity charges was 15.5 per cent and the average increase in gas charges

was 16.5 per cent, compared with an average increase in both areas of 8.5 per cent since this Government has been in office.

It may well be that the rate of inflation during the time the Leader of the Opposition was Minister for Industrial, Commercial and Regional Development was double the rate of inflation since the Labor Party has been in Government. I am prepared to accept that the rate of inflation doubled when he was Minister, and that when the Labor Party came to Government the rate of inflation was halved. That is the explanation being advanced by the Leader of the Opposition. I am very grateful indeed to him for advancing that explanation.

Let us refer now to the Water Authority. The Leader of the Opposition thinks that this Government did well by halving the average increase in SEC charges in comparison with the increases levied when he was Minister for Industrial, Commercial and Regional Development. In general terms, the Water Authority's water and sewerage charges in the city increased during the last three years of the previous Government's term in office—the Leader of the National Party would be interested in this because he was a vociferous critic of the Government of the day—by an average of 23.9 per cent.

In our case the annual average increase was 4.2 per cent for water and 6.3 per cent for sewerage. This great advocate of country consumers was in Narrogin telling the country people what he wanted to do, yet in the three years he was a Minister the annual average increase for water supplies to the country was 28.1 per cent. That figure should be compared with our average annual increase in the cost of country water supplies of 7.6 per cent. That is the difference and the change that has taken place—an increase of 400 per cent. What an extraordinary difference. How can the Leader of the Opposition have the gall to stand in this Chamber and suggest to the people of Western Australia that there is any comparison between the tawdry performance of his Government, of which he was a Minister for Industrial, Commercial and Regional Development, and this Government? It is unbelievable that he should have the gall to even raise the issue.

Let us deal with the issue of the rate of charges in Western Australia. It is true to say that the rate of charges in Western Australia levied by the State Energy Commission is generally higher than that in the Eastern States, and that has been the situation for many years. I will deal with the reasons: The first is that,

unlike the States to which the Leader of the Opposition referred, Western Australia subsidises very heavily its country electricity consumers by virtue of a uniform tariff charge. For example, at the moment the rate of subsidy for country consumers of electricity by virtue of the uniform charge to which this Government is fully committed, is in the order of \$60 million per annum. This is a subsidy from general electricity consumers whether they be people living in the suburbs of Perth or industry in Perth. I do not apologise for that nor do I consider that there is anything wrong with it. It is part of our social responsibility to ensure that those people living in country areas pay the same for electricity and gas as those living in the metropolitan area. It is a fundamental tenet for which we stand, but it costs \$60 million a year.

Does that happen in New South Wales or Queensland? The National Party may like to answer that question. Their colleague recently resigned from his role as their national leader and supporter of their national campaign. If one looks at his performance in Queensland—this great advocate of country people—the rates paid for electricity by people in north Queensland are far in excess of those paid by people living on the Gold Coast or in Brisbane. There is no uniform tariff charge in Queensland.

The policy of a uniform tariff charge in Western Australia was supported by the former Government. It is of fundamental benefit to the country people. I am not suggesting that this Government will change that policy, but it costs \$60 million a year. That is one area of substantial charge over and above those borne by a State not unlike Western Australia, such as Queensland.

There is also the fact that we have massive lengths of transmission lines. Let us consider that in the areas of Esperance or Kununurra for example, where we charge consumers something like 8c or 9c a kilowatt hour for electricity consumption, the actual cost is something like 26c or 30c a kilowatt hour. Not only do we have to use imported fuels in those areas to generate electricity, but also we have long transmission lines, the losses which go with them, small demand, and so on. That is why this Government has been at the forefront, not just in Australia but in the world, of experimenting with alternative energy sources in these high-cost areas; that is why we are supporting wind and wave power in Esperance, and other areas of alternative energy supply,

such as hydropower in the Ord. It is important to us as a State to ensure that people in remote areas get the power they need.

Mr MacKinnon interjected.

Mr PARKER: We are providing just as many funds for solar energy and renewable energy research as were provided before. It is interesting to hear the Leader of the Opposition talk about this issue. We are doing it more efficiently. The Opposition members are always saying that we should get things done by the private sector and aim for smaller government, but as soon as we try to farm out funds for private sector research the Opposition screams and shouts.

It is very interesting to note that at the convened meeting, which the Leader of the Opposition did not attend—it was the day after he assumed office so perhaps there was some excuse—he transmitted the message that he supported solar energy research; he did not say how, why or what and there was no commitment on his part. The Government has committed just as many funds to renewable energy research—probably more if one takes into account the wind and wave power activities at Esperance and the hydropower activity in the Kimberley area—in the time it has been in Government as the Opposition ever did. The Government is doing it more efficiently by passing it to the private sector. As soon as the Government does that—rather than spending the money itself—allowing other people to spend the money and contribute more effort—it is opposed because it is reducing its commitment. That is one area of substantial Government expenditure to provide services for the community, which means that our overall prices must necessarily be greater.

If we were to adopt the policy of Queensland or New South Wales of not having uniform tariffs for the country areas for electricity—

Mr MacKinnon: Who has proposed that?

Mr PARKER: I am not saying that the Government is proposing it; in fact, it is firmly opposed to it. But if we did move in that direction the net impact would be to reduce the level of tariffs to ordinary consumers in Western Australia by 10 per cent. That amount would be rebated to those living in the metropolitan area, but the people living in Kununurra, Esperance, or other country towns would pay far more for their electricity. That basically has been the policy adopted at a Federal level by the Liberal Party, although not by the National

Party. However, the National Party adopted and implemented that policy in Queensland. That is the difference.

I will deal with the other issues which affect SEC charges in Western Australia. The level of inventory that we have to fund is directly related to the long-term contractual position of the SEC. As a Government we have sought to improve the contractual position we inherited from the previous Government. In four years we have tried very hard to improve the contractual position on primary energy resources we inherited. That is in the area of both coal and gas, and if the member for Collie were in the Chamber he would be able to tell us about those areas in some considerable detail.

Suffice it to say that the bottom line of our energy inventory is that, as a result of contracts entered into when the Opposition was in power, in the year ending 30 June 1987 the value of our energy inventory in total will be \$161 million; that is, \$161 million worth of energy that we have purchased but cannot use despite the fact that the level of economic activity in this State has been well above the generally accepted base-line forecast for energy utilities worldwide, let alone in Australia—despite the fact that Western Australia has been well ahead of the rest of the Commonwealth; and despite the fact that we have had quite unheard of levels of energy consumption increase in Western Australia—six or seven per cent annually.

Mr MacKinnon: What effect has devaluation had?

Mr PARKER: Despite all that, devaluation has had no impact on the level of energy inventory. If anything it has helped it, because it has helped industry to use the energy.

Mr MacKinnon: Has devaluation helped the industry?

Mr PARKER: Were you not listening when I talked about this earlier? The member for Kalgoorlie and I argued with the member for Albany, when he was the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, about whether we should even begin to scrutinise SEC borrowings. That was at the time that the Opposition, when in Government, borrowed \$100 million or so.

Mr MacKinnon: Your Government is dropping the Australian dollar through the floor.

Mr PARKER: No.

Mr MacKinnon: Hawke and Burke.

Mr PARKER: Nonsense.

Mr MacKinnon: All the way down.

Mr PARKER: That is absolute nonsense. The Australian dollar was overvalued. Members opposite know it was overvalued. Everybody said it was overvalued. The yen was undervalued. The combination of those two factors changed the debt from \$100 million to \$250 million. We did not incur that debt, the Liberal Party did. We cannot wipe it out; we cannot refuse to pay it. We are a responsible Government and we have to abide by that debt.

Mr MacKinnon: It is your policy.

Mr PARKER: What does the member mean, our policy? Does he think it is our policy to have a realistic value for the dollar? The Leader of the Opposition is an economic illiterate. If he says that, he is so far out of kilter with the financial and economic community in this State, nationally and throughout the world, that he does not know what he is saying.

The bottom line is that the total value of our energy inventory next year will be about \$A244 million. The value of our energy inventory is the total value in the ground, or on the ground in the case of coal, of primary energy supplies that we have purchased but cannot use. Why did we purchase them? Because of long-term contracts which require us to purchase them.

Each year we have to borrow substantial amounts of money. This year we will be required to borrow, to meet our SEC charges, approximately \$83 million. That is to pay for the energy contracted for by the previous Government but which we cannot use.

A Government member: Just to pay for stuff we cannot use!

Mr PARKER: I am not talking about what we are buying to use. It is stuff which will stay in or on the ground which we cannot use. Next fiscal year our borrowing activities for new inventory—not the existing inventory but what we will be buying because of our contractual commitments—will be approximately \$118 million.

I can recall sitting on the other side of the House when the present Premier suggested that it might cost \$70 million a year to borrow for the North West Shelf gas project. The then Premier—I think he was Sir Charles Court—ridiculed the then Leader of the Opposition, or the member for Balga, whatever he was at the time, for suggesting that we might be borrowing \$70 million a year. Most people thought he might be gilding the lily.

This year the figure was \$83 million. Next year it will be \$118 million. Do members know what that means in terms of reduced tariffs? We can say approximately \$6 million for every percentage point increase. For \$118 million we are talking about something just under 20 per cent of tariff rates. That is a massive charge. This Opposition has the gall to suggest that there is a need for scrutiny. The scrutiny should have been undertaken five or seven years ago when these contracts were entered into.

The Opposition can scrutinise it all it likes. I invite members to negotiate with the North West Shelf joint venturers and get out of the contractual commitments they have entered into. I have been trying to do that for 3½ years, but it is no great shakes. It is not an easy task.

This sum of \$118 million next year is the result of the mistakes of members opposite; and they have the gall to suggest that the Government might have something to do with that.

Let me deal with interest costs. Not only do we have to pay this money out to multinational companies like Chevron, BP, and Shell to help them through the hard times, but we must also pay interest on that money. The interest cost this year will be \$15.8 million—the equivalent of about 2.75 per cent on tariffs.

Next year, because of the extra money we have to borrow to pay for the inventory, interest costs will be \$31 million; five per cent on costs. If it were not for those tariffs we would be paying people to use electricity. That is the extraordinary position we are in. It is extraordinary that members opposite have the gall to raise these matters with us.

I have already said that if the Chairman and members of the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee wish to examine any aspect of SEC finances, they are welcome. They only have to ask me and I will appear before them. I give this commitment tonight that my officers and I will appear before the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee to answer questions it may have. I will not be like a former member for Narrogin, who refused to say anything at all to the then Public Accounts Committee. I will not refuse to say anything to the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee. I will talk to it if that is what members of the committee want. There is no problem at all. I will give them the information they require.

The position we are in is that the discretionary costs of the SEC are now a fractional proportion of the overall costs—like labour costs for example. The Government as a whole has a problem with labour costs because they are a huge percentage of our Budget—60 per cent to 70 per cent. In the case of the SEC, not as a result of any decisions I have made or decisions made by the Minister for Labour, Productivity and Employment when he was the Minister, but as a result of earlier decisions over many years, the labour costs of the SEC are something like, from memory, 16 per cent or 17 per cent of the total costs.

As it happens, our labour costs in the SEC have risen at a fairly low rate. The productivity per employee has gone up very considerably. The number of kilowatt hours of energy per employee—I do not have the figures at my fingertips—have been very substantially increased. The level of employment in the SEC has decreased at a time when the level of energy demand for servicing has increased substantially.

In those areas where it is possible for Governments to make savings we have made them. We have even tried to the best of our ability to change the contracts negotiated by the Opposition when it was in Government.

Take the gas contract. Two years ago we were able to reduce the potential maximum liability of the SEC due to that gas contract alone from something like \$7 billion to something like \$2.5 billion or \$3 billion. By negotiation with the Griffin Coal Co we have been able to reduce our take-or-pay level from 2.1 million tonnes a year negotiated by the former Government to 1.95 million tonnes a year, with no reduction in employment on the coalfields. I negotiated that.

We have had other smaller successes which have resulted in a reduction in the inventory. That figure I quoted earlier of \$118 million would have been higher if we had not achieved those changes. There are still changes to be made. I am not saying the Government is not proceeding in its own way. It is managing the problems it has inherited, and even improving the position.

Mr Court: Before you get too carried away, do you believe overall that the North West Shelf gas project has been a good one for the State?

Mr PARKER: I believe it would have been possible to have a North West Shelf gas project at the levels of commitment originally entered

into by, for example, the member for Floreat when he was the Minister, at 250 million cubic feet of gas a day, which would have been more than enough to service the pipeline costs and to allow that project to proceed and to be a very good project for Western Australia.

Two serious and fundamental errors were made in that project. The first was the decision taken by the then Premier, the former member for Nedlands, without any reference to anybody, to increase the south west take from 250 to 300 million cubic feet of gas a day. There is no reference whatsoever in any department, SEC, or other file as to any justification for that increase.

The other fundamental decision was the decision to take on the marketing of the Pilbara gas at 75 million cubic feet of gas a day, again a decision without any basis or justification. I do not argue that the pipeline project of itself is wrong. I believe the pipeline project does pay for itself. If one looks at the economics of the pipeline per se, there is no problem with it. Even at the current gas levels that are being experienced, the pipeline pays for itself.

However, the big problem was the decision to take on that extra 50 million cubic feet of gas a day in the south west and the 75 million cubic feet of gas in the Pilbara. The Pilbara issue is compounded by the fact that Pilbara gas is about twice as expensive as the gas which is in the south west and about twice as expensive as alternative energy sources, and substantially more expensive than the same gas would be if it were sold to a household in Osaka or Tokyo.

Mr Court: What happens if the project would not go ahead if those commitments were not made?

Mr PARKER: I do not think that is the case.

Mr Court: That was what was said, that the project simply would not go ahead.

Mr PARKER: I do not believe that.

Mr Court: You do not believe that?

Mr PARKER: No. There is no evidence for that whatsoever.

Mr Court: Your answer is not correct.

Mr PARKER: Why not? The member has asked me questions. Why is it not correct?

Mr Court: Because they simply said they would not go ahead unless those commitments were in place.

Mr PARKER: Let us take the two issues. Who says that? Where was that said? The 250 million cubic feet of gas a day was negotiated in 1977 by the—

Mr Court: It is now 1987, 10 years later, and you are up in Parliament nitpicking about something that your own Premier has said is a fantastic project and is going to be vital to the future of the State. You have been in Government for four years and you are still carrying on about it. You can go back to when you and your mates were on the Public Accounts Committee or whatever, and you wanted an inquiry years ago.

Mr PARKER: I am not nitpicking. I am talking about \$120 million a year. If the member for Nedlands considers that to be nitpicking, then I am a nitpicker; I acknowledge it.

Mr Court: At every function you go to, your Premier says they are spending millions of dollars a day on this project which is fantastic for the State, and here you are getting up and saying it is not a decent project.

Mr PARKER: It would be interesting to know whether the member for Nedlands is representing his constituents as a whole or simply one constituent who lives at 46 Waratah Avenue. I challenge the member for Nedlands to reveal to me where there is any evidence to show that had that extra 125 million cubic feet of gas a day commitment not been entered into, the project would not have gone into force? The member will not answer.

Mr Court interjected.

Mr PARKER: The LNG project has absolutely nothing to do with this.

Mr Court: You come into the House and talk about something that was negotiated 10 years ago.

Mr PARKER: When the member's father was Premier, I can remember it was all going to be—

Mr Court: I do not have to defend him. I am talking to you.

Mr PARKER: That is not the purpose of your discussion.

Mr Court: You would not have a project to talk about.

Mr PARKER: I make it clear there was nothing in the domestic gas project which would have supported the LNG project. Indeed, the LNG joint venturers have made it clear they would have been happy to proceed without a domestic gas project.

Mr Court: I have never heard so much nonsense.

Mr PARKER: Is the member denying that? Is he saying that the LNG joint venturers would not have been happy to proceed without a domestic gas contract?

Mr Court: When the project was negotiated they would not have gone ahead with it if—

Mr PARKER: That is simply not true.

Mr Court: They would not have gone ahead with it—

Mr PARKER: I challenge the member for Nedlands to provide one skerrick of evidence to prove that. In fact, the evidence shows that the joint venturers would have preferred to go ahead alone with an export-oriented project in the first instance.

Mr MacKinnon: So you do not want the domestic project; you do not believe it was good?

Mr PARKER: No. I am saying the project—

Mr MacKinnon: You said a moment ago the project was good. Now you are saying we should not have it.

Mr PARKER: I am saying the project which the joint venturers wanted was the LNG project. They were prepared to put up with a domestic gas project in order to get the LNG project, although they did not particularly want it, and it would have gone at the 250 million cubic feet of gas a day figure. I do not want to go through the whole history, but I could spend hours talking about this because no subject has occupied a greater proportion of my time than this one. I can assure the member that I have no doubt about who would win the debate on this particular matter between me and the member for Nedlands, or for that matter, the member's father.

Mr Court: I will debate with you any time on that subject.

Mr PARKER: I would be delighted to do it. Let us find an opportunity to do it, because I would love every second of it.

The fundamental issue is that there was a contract for 250 million cubic feet of gas a day. I do not criticise the Government for entering into the various commitments that led to that, and I do not criticise the former Government for entering into the various commitments that led to the pipeline project. However, without any justification whatsoever from the depart-

ments, the SEC, or anybody else, the then Government increased that from 250 to 300 after a commensurate contractual obligation—

Mr Court: In two years' time you will be complaining there is not enough gas coming through the system. In your first year in Government you said, "We will put in the smelter and that will use up the gas here." The member for Maylands was the Minister then, and he had all these great plans all under control; no worries.

Mr PARKER: The member for Maylands was the Speaker at the time, as I recall it.

There is no problem about the utilisation of gas. This Government has done a very substantial amount of work to attract those projects to Western Australia—much more than the former Government did. All I am saying is that the decision, which was made without any justification or rationale, without any proposals being put forward, was the thing that committed the economics of this project.

Secondly, the decision to take on the Pilbara gas marketing after one pellet plant had closed and after it was known that the second pellet plant would close, being the major markets for gas, was taken after those events and was fundamentally wrong. That is the position.

Mr Court: You would be good at running this country historically. You could get all the books in front of you and say 1963, 1965.

Mr PARKER: I would be delighted to compare the economic record of the Government as a whole, or of my portfolio in particular, in the last 3½ to four years, with that of an equivalent period of the former Government. I will lay it on the table as an open book because there is no question what the result will be. It is twice as good as that of the former Government. I would have no compunction about that. I invite the member for Nedlands, the Leader of the Opposition, or anybody else, to debate those issues with me on any occasion—on television or anywhere else. We could even hold it in the Dalkeith Hall, for all I care. That is the position.

The other issues raised by the Opposition relate to the general level of increase. This House has heard interminable debate on the question of how the general level of taxation collections by the Government does not equate with the incidence of taxation. I do not want to traverse that debate yet again, but the position is that in general terms the Opposition continually seeks to confuse the issue of the incidence of taxation with the level of tax collections.

The erstwhile guru of conservative politics in this country, the Premier of Queensland—if he is still the Premier of Queensland; he was this morning—

Mr Cowan: Yes, he is.

Mr PARKER: I am glad to hear that is the case. His whole argument is that if we reduce the incidence of taxation, we increase the tax take. The Opposition—that is, the Liberal Opposition in this State—says that because the tax take increases, the incidence increases. That is absolute nonsense. The fact is that in the whole range of important areas of economic activity this Government has reduced in real terms the incidence of taxation on individuals.

Mr MacKinnon: Which one?

Mr PARKER: Payroll tax.

Mr MacKinnon: We now have the equal highest level of payroll tax in the country, you fool. You increased it last year, don't you remember?

Mr PARKER: But the vast bulk of businesses in this State pay the lowest rate of payroll tax in Australia. We do not make any apology for the increases we made last year.

Mr MacKinnon: Give us another example.

Mr PARKER: Would the Leader of the Opposition like to debate with me on that?

Mr MacKinnon: On payroll tax? Indeed!

Mr PARKER: We do not make any apology for the fact that the State Energy Commission, or Hamersley Iron, or Alcoa pay six per cent payroll tax. The important thing is that Riverton Engineering and other companies of that size pay the lowest rate of payroll tax in the country.

Mr MacKinnon: It is destroying the competitiveness of the larger companies. They are paying more payroll tax than ever they have done before.

Mr PARKER: That is nonsense. Is the Leader of the Opposition suggesting that that incidence has any impact on the competitiveness of those businesses? This Government has had a very marked influence on the reduction of the intrinsic costs to those production areas, and in the important economic-generating area of small and medium-size businesses those people have had very substantial reductions in that area of taxation and, indeed, in most cases pay the lowest rates of such tax in the country. Some 5 000 businesses that were paying payroll tax when

the Leader of the Opposition was Minister for Industrial, Commercial and Regional Development no longer pay that tax.

Mr Troy: And each and every one of them knows what we have done.

Mr PARKER: Let us not forget that this man—the Leader of the Opposition—was the Minister for Industrial, Commercial and Regional Development, nor that when he was the Minister 5 000 employers paid payroll tax who now do not pay payroll tax. What an extraordinary result! What an extraordinary achievement! That alone would explain this Government's phenomenal electoral success over the last few years. Maybe that is the reason for our success—maybe it is the reason for the Leader of the Opposition's abject failure; I do not know. However, it is certainly a very instructive statistic.

Mr Williams interjected.

Mr PARKER: Did the member for Clontarf not hear my earlier statement?

Mr Williams: You should not make a song about having reduced it when in fact you have not.

Mr PARKER: We have reduced it.

Mr Williams: You have not. You are receiving more. If you are fair dinkum, you should reduce the rate further so you do not receive more money.

Mr PARKER: So the member for Clontarf is not disputing the fact that we have reduced payroll tax; he is simply saying we should reduce it further.

Mr Williams. Exactly.

Mr PARKER: I accept that that is a legitimate aim, but at least the member for Clontarf acknowledges that the fundamental position of the Government has been to reduce payroll tax.

Mr Williams: But you have not. We did the same thing, and the take increased because of the employment and the wages going up.

Mr PARKER: Now the member for Clontarf is not only acknowledging that the Government has reduced payroll tax, but also that there has been a substantial increase in employment. I invite the member for Clontarf to come and sit on this side of the House, because he is doing a marvellous job of advancing the cause of the Government.

Mr Williams: Not likely! You are a real little twister.

Mr PARKER: I would like to deal with one other important area of economic activity raised by the Leader of the Opposition in his speech, and to a lesser degree by the member for Albany—the various fees and charges levied for particular activities of Government. Some of those areas of activity deal with something which is a cost directly incurred by the Government on behalf of the private sector by doing things for it which it desires. An example of that in my own portfolio is the publication of geological survey maps, where there is no great benefit to the Government in the publication of those maps but they are eagerly awaited by the private sector and are in great demand. Indeed, some maps recently published on the eastern goldfields region sold out in 1½ days.

The Government has decided as a matter of policy that the publication of those maps should be done on a cost recovery basis. In terms of revenue the amount recovered is quite trivial—a few hundred thousand dollars a year.

Mr Cowan interjected.

Mr PARKER: The members of the Opposition who have spoken thus far have talked about some increases which have gone beyond the inflation rate. I simply instanced an example of the publication of geological survey maps, where we take the view that they are not for the benefit of the Government but we publish them for the benefit of the private sector and should get cost recovery. The costs are related to a range of factors, some of which we have influence over and others of which we do not. We take the view that the fees imposed should reflect those costs.

Mr MacKinnon: Fishing licence fees have gone up by hundreds of per cent.

Mr PARKER: I will come to those in a moment. I am talking about the various categories, and the first is the area of cost recovery. We make absolutely no apology for achieving that cost recovery. We undertake those activities for the benefit of the private sector, and the private sector both should and does accept entirely that it should pay for them. There is no-one else, for example, who can produce geological survey maps. The private sector accepts that, and makes a fortune out of our publishing those maps, even if the price of them has doubled or trebled—I do not know what the actual result of the increase has been.

The other area of activity is where the people of the community own a common property resource and the job of the Government is to

ensure an adequate return to the community for that common property resource, given the nature of the resource, particularly if it is a depleting resource or a resource which is in need of management.

An example is a mineral or an oil commodity, where it is important that any return to the community recognises both an adequate return and the fact that the depleting commodity is at stake. That is a fundamental which is accepted. Certainly it has been accepted and adopted by Margaret Thatcher and her Government in the United Kingdom. She has moved to that policy for North Sea oil, for example. That is a fundamental issue. That will result in some producers paying substantially more than they used to and some paying substantially less. That is a much more rational, dry approach to the levying of economic rents on something which is a common property resource.

Mr MacKinnon: Are you saying that fishery licences are not economic rents?

Mr PARKER: There is no question that fishery licences are economic rents. We are saying that fishery licences were unreasonably low.

Mr MacKinnon: What about boat registration fees?

Mr PARKER: I will come to boat registration fees later. Every time I speak on an issue, the Leader of the Opposition wants me to deal with the next issue before I have dealt with the previous one. I refer to fishery licences first. The fundamental issue is that a rent was not being charged on a common property owned by the community. Not only in terms of its return to the community, for a resource owned by the community—that is, the fishery—but also for the cost of managing it. Again, the Government makes no apology for moving gradually—and we certainly have not got there yet—to a policy of insuring that the community gains the benefit of a common property resource.

I now deal with the boat licences. A few months after the Government came into power, there was a considerable dispute between a particular private-property developer, a Mr Englebrecht, and the Shire of Peppermint Grove, over whether that man would be able to develop a major facility on a jetty licence he held in the Swan River at Peppermint Grove.

When I went to that site, as Minister for Planning at the time, with the then Minister for Transport, we discovered that the amount being paid for a licence to have a jetty over a substantial area of riverbed was \$50 a year. Not

only did we discover that, but we also discovered there were hundreds of other people also paying \$50 a year for similar facilities. We make absolutely no apology for the fact that we have required those people who were paying \$50 a year for acres of the river, to pay a more reasonable rental. Mr Engelbrecht was paying \$50 a year and the descendants of General Hobbs were also paying \$50 a year. I am happy to discuss these matters further if I am given an extension of time. I rest my case.

MR COWAN (Merredin—Leader of the National Party) [9.54 pm]: I assume we are talking about Notice of Motion No. 9.

The SPEAKER: The Minister did have difficulty, but he eventually came back to the motion just at the time I was going to mention it.

Mr COWAN: I am very pleased he was able to anticipate your move, Mr Speaker.

The National Party supports the motion. After listening intently to the comments made by the Minister, I find he has presented an extremely good case for the Government to support this motion. The whole theme of his argument was that the Government has been performing. If the Government has been performing, I would have thought that it would jump at the opportunity to be able to demonstrate that it is not a victim of belief in its own propaganda but that it could give a body—albeit a party supporting the Government which has a majority in a Select Committee—an opportunity to verify what the Minister was saying.

From the National Party's point of view, the Minister has stated a very good case for the Government to support this motion. If it wanted, it could have taken out some of the latter sections in the motion which it might have regarded as being inconsequential or superfluous. The main substance of the motion could quite easily have been supported purely and simply because the Minister's argument was that the Government was performing particularly well and had nothing to hide. Why does it not pass over the responsibility of scrutiny of some of the statutory authorities and Government agencies to the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee and let it report to this Parliament, thereby making public some of the activities of those statutory authorities and Government agencies?

Mr D. L. Smith: Does the member for Mt Marshall support your attitude?

Mr COWAN: I am sure he would. My comment to the member for Mitchell is that if the committee were to assume some responsibility for investigating the statutory authorities and Government agencies, then I am sure that he, as the chairman, and the other members of the committee would have the competence to be able to determine a priority about what they were going to do. To say that the committee is subject to enough pressure or is doing enough work is quite superficial.

Mr D. L. Smith: If that is all the exercise is going to show, what a waste of effort.

Mr COWAN: We do not know that. Fortunately, I am not as gullible as the member for Mitchell and neither is a large group of the Western Australian public. They do not believe the material that emanates from the Government—

Mr Pearce: "You can fool most of the people most of the time" is the motto of the Queensland National Party, which you support.

Mr COWAN: I do not know what the motto of the Queensland National Party is, but there are a lot of people in Queensland who give much support to the activities of the Queensland National Party Government and, believe me, it does a very good job.

Let us talk about the Western Australian Government. I repeat to the member for Mitchell that I am not so gullible as to believe all the statements made by the Government about how well it is performing. I would have thought if it were performing that well and was confident of its ability, it would not hesitate to pass over the scrutiny of its performance to a body which has a majority of members in the party supporting the Government. Nevertheless, it is a body which can be expected, to some extent, to deliver a report to this Parliament which may well endorse what has been said.

Mr Pearce: They do not have a public accounts committee in Queensland. Do you support that?

Mr COWAN: No, I do not. If the Minister recalls, that is what broke the original coalition Government in Queensland some years ago. I am not saying the member is at fault. I am saying I do not agree with a Parliament's not having a public accounts committee; I accept that there needs to be a Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee.

Mr P. J. Smith: So you don't accept what he is doing; you think he is wrong?

Mr COWAN: I agree with that.

Mr D. L. Smith interjected.

Mr COWAN: I have far better things to talk about with him than that.

Mr Pearce: Are you still running "Joh" candidates now that Joh isn't running?

Mr COWAN: The National Party in Western Australia did not run "Joh" candidates; it ran National Party candidates in Western Australia.

Madam Acting Speaker (Dr Lawrence), I am quite sure you will advise the Leader of the House that if he interjects further and tries to sidetrack me, you will stop him from interjecting and me from responding. I do not want to waste the time of the House to any great extent tonight.

I repeat, because we have a few slow learners in this place: The Government stated a very good case for the support of this motion. If the Government wanted, to some extent, to depoliticise the content of this motion, it could have moved an amendment to delete some of the words in the motion, particularly those which are prefixed by the letters (a) to (e). That would then have merely referred the activities of the various Government authorities to the scrutiny of the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee.

I am quite sure that it would have been in the Government's best interests to do that because there are many people who do not necessarily believe what the Government says. If another body could verify what was said, although there would be some people who would say it was just another whitewash, there would be a number of others who would be prepared to accept that the glowing performance to which we had to listen tonight is—if not totally—in some part accurate. I would imagine that would be in the best interests of the Government, so it surprises me that the Government has chosen to reject this motion.

I assure the House that the National Party supports this motion and we commend the Opposition Liberal Party for raising the issue.

MR HASSELL (Cottesloe) [10.04 pm]: I am very glad that this motion has finally reached the stage tonight where there will be a vote on it because it is a motion which I first promoted, in a different form, as Leader of the Opposition last year, with the support of the Parliamentary Liberal Party. On that occasion the House debated the motion to a limited extent, but it was not voted on before the session came to an

end. However, in the course of an interjection at one stage the Leader of the House was careful to say that the Government had not rejected the motion. The Leader of the House raised my hopes that the Government might accept it, so I was sorry that we did not have a vote on it last year when apparently the Government gave some serious thought to accepting the principle.

We heard very clearly tonight from the Minister for Minerals and Energy—I assume we heard clearly—that the Government will reject the motion, but at least we will have that rejection on the record and will be able to have the Government judged by its action. The Government has been put to a test tonight—a very simple test of its credibility and its honesty—and it has failed. The Government, which insists that private sector prices charged in a highly competitive industry must be measured and judged, rejects the proposition that its own prices in a monopoly situation should be checked at all.

Mr D. L. Smith: That is not true. The Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee already has the power to investigate it, if it wants to.

Mr HASSELL: The member for Mitchell has to be careful in what he says in case he offends one of the Ministers, and the House has to listen for half an hour to his apology.

It is important that we get this very clear, and it is important that the public understand this matter. I sincerely hope that despite the speech given tonight by the Minister for Minerals and Energy, which did not deal with the subject at all, the media understood what the debate was about, and will report it accordingly. It is important that the public understand that this Government, which is spending hundreds of thousands of taxpayers' dollars to check up on prices charged by private enterprise shopkeepers in the most highly competitive industry there is, rejected the proposition that there should be a check on the Government's prices in the essential monopoly services of water, sewerage, gas, and electricity. These are services which the public have no option but to use, have no choice of supplier, and over which the Government has exclusive and total control.

Mr D. L. Smith interjected.

Mr HASSELL: In the short time available to me, I do not wish to be diverted by the member for Mitchell. I do not intend to respond to him.

I am pointing out the simple facts of the situation, and it is absolutely irrelevant for the Minister for Minerals and Energy to rant and rant about what was done in 1981 in terms of energy contracts, gas supplies, and so on. As the Leader of the National Party said, it is perhaps for those very reasons that today we need to have a check on the Government's monopoly prices.

Let me just refer to one factor that is relevant to the speech of the Minister for Minerals and Energy—the huge stockpile of coal at Collie. Do members think that the public of Western Australia are not entitled to ask the Government, "Does not that huge stockpile affect the prices we are paying for electricity?" Are not the public entitled to ask the Government, through some independent voice or authority, why the Government is stockpiling all that coal? Why is it that all sorts of people are employed to maintain and to service that stockpile, and why is it building up when our electricity prices, as the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, are way ahead of similar commodity prices in other States?

Those are questions which the public are entitled to ask. I remind the House that when this Government was in Opposition, it employed the resources of Murdoch University and of Dr Elizabeth Harman and her people to attack the energy policies of the then Government and to question what was being done. The Opposition is simply saying, on behalf of the public, that there should be some independent check of the prices being charged to consumers by the Government monopolies. It has nothing to do with the rights and wrongs of what was done in 1981, because whether an extra 50 million cubic feet a day was right or wrong, it is much too late to haggle about it in terms of the reality confronting consumers today. Whether we should have taken on the Pilbara gas contract is irrelevant, because the fact is we did, and it binds the State and affects the factors which go to make up the charges imposed on consumers.

The point is that the Government has not said it accepts the principle that there should be some independent body to assess the charges being made by these authorities but that it disagrees with the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee being that body. I could understand that and the Minister's saying, "You are right about the principle but wrong about the method," but he did not say

that, and the Government has not said it. The Government is not offering alternatives as it should do.

I originally put a different proposal to our party room last year. I worked up a proposition that we should follow the American model to some extent where they have privately-owned public utilities, and because they are privately owned the Government as the regulator and supervisor is much better able to identify the public interest and protect it. The Americans have what we call price justification authorities, but which they call something else—regulatory authorities—to check on the justification for public utility charges. My original proposition to our party room was that we should propose some sort of special body—a commission—with independence from Government and statutory authority to test the charges being raised by the public authorities. Our party decided that that was not necessarily the right way to go, and it was more appropriate to go for the institution of Parliament through the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee. As the Minister for Minerals and Energy has acknowledged, that committee has a commendable record, in the main, in acting as a parliamentary committee and in a proper and bipartisan way. Our party decided that a motion in that direction was the right way to go, and I supported that and brought forward a motion last year, and I have had pleasure in doing so again this year.

However, the Government rejects the principle, and it is establishing a very clear point tonight—it has a double standard. It is dishonest with the consumers of this State. On one hand it is saying it has to employ Caris Bailey and spend hundreds of thousands of dollars of the taxpayers' money to check up on shop A as against shop B and shop C and shop D, and to check on Midland against Armadale and other places, and publish it at great expense in the Press, even though those shops are in competition with each other in the most highly competitive industry in Australia—retailing of consumer items.

Mr Watt: By their own admission prices have stayed pretty much the same.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Dr Lawrence): Order! I think we should have less background noise.

Mr HASSELL: The Government refuses to acknowledge that there ought to be any kind of check on Government monopoly prices. That is what comes out of this debate. The relevance

of this whole debate, which is now into its second year in terms of discussion, and which will be brought to a conclusion by a vote in a few minutes—is that the Government has placed irrefutably on record a double standard which says that in the private sector there must be a check, although there is competition, but in the public sector we must trust the Government exclusively.

Mr MacKinnon: In the State public sector, because they believe there should be an independent inquiry into Commonwealth monopolies.

Mr HASSELL: Yes, so it is a double double-standard, and a pretty poor standard because, as the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, when it comes to scoring a few cheap points by having a shot at Telecom, the Premier says we should check up on that body because it is making too much money. The Premier's great capacity for heaping scorn on people who he thinks do not understand things economic is not applied to himself when he fails to recognise the fact that despite the enormity of the figures of Telecom's profit, it is very small in terms of return on capital invested. I am not defending Telecom's charges; I think they should be checked, but so should those of the Water Authority and the State Energy Commission.

We owe it to the public, and I do not understand why the Government finds that an embarrassment. I have never understood why Governments are sometimes so reluctant to let things be examined. A Government can advantage itself by having outside bodies check up on the activities of departments and authorities, unless it is pursuing a policy issue. I do not believe outside bodies should take over policy, and in practice as a Minister I made that clear and I pursued that line. However, in terms of administration and justification for economic efficiency, it is something which can be checked up on.

It does not matter how clever the Minister for Minerals and Energy is, or any other Minister of this Government or our Government, we all know that these matters of public administration are overwhelmingly large. They are much too deep for Ministers to get down to the nitty-gritty of what is going on, even with some of the very large issues. We know the Government has an energy oversupply problem, and we know the Water Authority has to consider delicate questions of self-funding or capital works as against borrowing. We know the member for Floreat when he was Minister

sought to make the Water Authority a body which would become independent of borrowing so that in the long-term it would be self-financing and consumers would be relieved of the burden of interest charges and debt.

These are things we can understand and see will affect charges, and so can an expert body or the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee, expertly advised. That does not mean the Government should run away from the very simple proposition that we put forward, which is that every year about this time, and perhaps tomorrow, the Government announces charges which affect everyone—charges for essential services such as water, gas, electricity, sewerage, and transport. These are charges we have to pay; we have no option. We will go home tonight and, before we retire, we will use every one of those services. We have no option but to use them. Not one person in the metropolitan area can escape the necessity to use those Government services. None of those services can be bought from anyone else but the Government. It is a monopoly situation. No one can set up in competition with them, even though most people would not want to because one or two of them are a burden.

None of that detracts from the fact that no one protects the public by taking an independent look at those bodies. The Minister for Minerals and Energy, in his long, irrelevant diatribe, referred to the use of outside experts. That is exactly what we are seeking. We should get someone from outside to ask about such matters as the efficiency of manpower in the Water Authority of Western Australia. Are we featherbedding? There are many reasons for our suspecting that we are supporting featherbedding. Many cosy little deals have been done over day labour and so on. We know about them, and of course the consumer is paying for them.

There are many reasons to suggest that the coal has been stockpiled at Collie because of the cosy little deals done between the Government and unions to maintain production levels. That is an enormous cost to the taxpayer. It may have happened for some other reason, but that does not matter. The point is that consumers of this State whom the Government professes to be concerned about when it comes to their buying their groceries have no protection whatsoever in terms of an independent analysis and assessment.

If the Government rejects this motion, it is demonstrating not only its double standards, but also its lack of sincerity in its professed concern for consumers. It is also doing itself in the eye. It should accept the principles of the motion, if not the motion, and it should look at finding ways to put those monopoly suppliers of essential services under the scrutiny they deserve, to see whether their charges are justifiable and efficient and improve them if they are not.

Who would get the credit for that? The Government would, of course. It would proclaim loudly that it had appointed someone to check these utilities and had caused changes to be made.

The Government will make a very grave error if it rejects this motion. Through the words of the Minister for Minerals and Energy, it has rejected the principle that Government monopolies should be scrutinised to justify their charges.

I support the motion.

MR MacKINNON (Murdoch—Leader of the Opposition) [10.25 pm]: The Opposition speakers in this debate have clearly indicated the reasons this motion should be supported. Nothing the Minister for Minerals and Energy said in his speech gave any indication why the Government wants to avoid this issue. In fact, as the Leader of the National Party indicated, the Minister's speech was really in favour of the motion.

It was extraordinary that the Minister should refuse to have incorporated in *Hansard* a graph which he had published in the accounts of the State Energy Commission last year. That action should have indicated to everyone that the Government has something to hide and that is the reason it will not support this motion. The Government has double standards. It wants to apply one set of standards to the private sector and Commonwealth agencies, and other set of standards to itself.

I give a categorical commitment that, in Government, we will not refuse to be accountable. All taxes and charges will be available for scrutiny by the public. As a consequence we will have an improved administration in this State.

Question put and a division taken with the following result—

Ayes 18

Mr Blaikie	Mr Schell
Mr Cash	Mr Spriggs
Mr Court	Mr Stephens
Mr Cowan	Mr Thompson
Mr Grayden	Mr Trenorden
Mr Hassell	Mr Tubby
Mr House	Mr Watt
Mr MacKinnon	Mr Wiese
Mr Mensaros	Mr Williams

(Teller)

Noes 24

Dr Alexander	Mr Gordon Hill
Mrs Beggs	Dr Lawrence
Mr Bertram	Mr Marlborough
Mr Bridge	Mr Parker
Mr Brian Burke	Mr Pearce
Mr Burkett	Mr D. L. Smith
Mr Carr	Mr Taylor
Mr Donovan	Mr Troy
Mr Peter Dowding	Mrs Watkins
Mr Evans	Dr Watson
Mr Grill	Mr Wilson
Mrs Henderson	Mrs Buchanan

(Teller)

Pairs

Ayes	Noes
Mr Clarke	Mr P. J. Smith
Mr Laurance	Mr Tom Jones
Mr Lewis	Mr Hodge
Mr Bradshaw	Mr Thomas
Mr Lightfoot	Dr Gallop
Mr Crane	Mr Bryce
Mr Rushton	Mr Read

Question thus negatived.

Motion defeated.

POLYCHLORINATED BIPHENYLS

Mobile Incinerator: Motion

MR SCHELL (Mt Marshall) [10.30 pm]: I move—

That the State Government abandon its plans to establish a P.C.B. incinerator at Koolyanobbing and adopt, as a policy, the disposal of P.C.B.'s where they are currently stored, by means of a mobile incinerator so that—

- the risk of accidental spillage in transporting the P.C.B., to the incinerator is eliminated,
- there is no basis upon which the Koolyanobbing area can be developed into national waste disposal centre.

The definition of polychlorinated biphenyls as outlined in a public environmental report is as follows—

PCBs are a group of synthetic chemicals that have been widely used in electrical equipment since the 1930s. They are now being phased out of use because of perceived health risks and their potential to cause long-term environmental pollution.

The replacement of PCBs is creating increases in stockpiles of waste in Western Australia for which there is no local satisfactory disposal method. High temperature incineration effectively destroys PCBs provided that the operation is managed according to specific procedures.

That is what we are told!

The decision to establish an incinerator at Koolyanobbing was made with little consultation with the Yilgarn community and with no consultation with the nearby communities. After one consultation with the Yilgarn Shire Council, a public meeting was called at Southern Cross on 4 March. A number of specialists were in attendance at that meeting, and as far as the people of the Yilgarn and nearby areas were concerned, they talked over the heads of the people with scientific jargon and expected them to believe all the details. The result was that the citizens of the Yilgarn put forward a submission rejecting the proposal; and I believe that that submission is still under consideration by the Government. Other local authorities, the Western Australian Farmers Federation, and several organisations have also opposed the proposal.

Several glaring anomalies are apparent in the proposal to build the incinerator at Koolyanobbing. Currently PCBs are stored mainly in the Pilbara and in the Perth metropolitan area. The public environmental report states that the procedure to burn PCBs is perfectly safe. Why cannot they be incinerated on a site in the Pilbara or in the Perth metropolitan area? The report also states that mobile incinerators are feasible. Such a method would prevent any danger that could arise from the transportation of the PCBs to the proposed incinerator at Koolyanobbing. The problem of transportation would be solved if they were incinerated on site.

No matter how safe is the transportation of PCBs in various containers which will be carted on trucks—that is the plan—the risk of a major impact accident is always a possibility.

Such an accident would create many problems for local communities. The local emergency services would not be trained to handle such an emergency situation, and emergency workers would not have the necessary protection gear if such an accident occurred near a small community between Northam and Southern Cross. Such an emergency situation could possibly be handled in the metropolitan area. In the case of an accident, we must also consider the effect of the PCBs on the environment.

The heart of the Western Australian agricultural area is situated between the metropolitan area and Koolyanobbing, and there are a number of built-up areas along the way. The transportation of PCBs to Koolyanobbing will create a danger to the health of people who reside along that route.

Communities along the Great Eastern Highway have been made aware of the possible dangers and are frightened of the hazards that could occur. They certainly have been made aware of the dangers—not by consultation with the Government or any other group, but by accident.

I will quote from a letter from the Shire of Tammin which is similar to many letters I have received from other shires in the central wheatbelt area, particularly those along the Great Eastern Highway. The letter states—

2. Had this Council not received a letter from a Mr P Cirulis of Kalgoorlie, it would have been unaware that a PER had been prepared and that the Environmental Protection Authority had invited submissions thereon.
3. The minimum amount of publicity and the fact that this local authority and others along the Great Eastern Highway that I have contacted, have not received a copy of the PER suggests that the Government/and or its Departments wishes to keep the entire project as quiet as possible.

With reference to the shire's fears regarding the transportation of PCB wastes, the letter states—

The PER states, "Transportation of PCB wastes to the disposal site is considered to present the largest potential risk of accidental environmental and human exposure to PCB's relative to other components in the disposal operation."

Further on the letter states—

This Council considers that country people put up with a lot—higher cost of living, extra transport costs, withdrawal of Government services—and the last thing they want are trucks laden with toxic PCBs going through their towns to an incinerator just up the road. The entire exercise seems to be out of sight out of mind, where the protest will be quietest and the number of votes, least.

The proposed incinerator at Koolyanobbing will be established on a site which is on the standard gauge railway line, which is connected not only to Perth, but also to the Eastern States. The Government has promised that the PCBs from Western Australia will be the only waste treated at the proposed Koolyanobbing plant and that once the treatment has been completed, the plant will be closed down. We have heard about Government promises before. The fact that the incinerator is to be established on the standard gauge railway line has increased the fears of the people of the Yilgarn and the surrounding areas that the site may eventually be developed into a major disposal industry with PCBs being transported there from all over the nation.

I understand that a PCB incinerator was established in Perth, but was closed some time ago for environmental reasons. I wonder whether the operation ceased for political reasons. Perhaps the Government was scared of political backlash from environmental groups. Perhaps that is the reason it has decided to move the operation to the Yilgarn, which has a smaller population and, therefore, the backlash from the community would not be as great as that which would be received in the metropolitan area. The points I have raised are sufficient for the people of the eastern wheatbelt to reject the proposal.

If the public environmental report is proved wrong in the long term and a danger does exist because of the proposed incinerator, the local community will have everything to lose. The local people have just cause to be concerned, especially when they remember what happened at Chernobyl. I realise that it was a different situation altogether, but it showed what happens when waste products are not controlled and affect the environment. PCB wastes, if not controlled, could affect the agricultural industry.

We must remember that 62 per cent of Western Australia's hard grain is grown within 115 kilometres of Koolyanobbing. The effect on overseas markets of other countries' refusing to buy this grain, or sheep and other agricultural products from the area would be catastrophic for the economy of this State. Also land values in the area would be affected. It is hard enough now to attract people to these areas for the various Government services, schools, etc., but the fear of a health danger from the PCBs in nearby communities would be a further deterrent to people coming to the country areas.

I ask the Government in its contemplation of this motion to bear in mind the fears of the people in the Yilgarn and its environs, and the areas en route to Koolyanobbing. Secondly, the Government should bear in mind the right of the people in those areas to have a say in the development of any industry in their area, and acknowledge the right of those people to say no if they have fears about the effect of any industry on the community.

If the Government is convinced of the safety of this process and believes it is the best means of disposal, why does it not incinerate the PCBs on location using a portable incinerator? That could be done and, if it were, there would be no possibility of damage occurring during an impact accident as these PCBs were en route. If the Government shares the concern of the people of the Yilgarn about the safety of the process of incinerating the PCBs, why not incinerate them in a remote area with a portable incinerator? In other words, the incinerator could be moved around and if it were located in remote areas the PCBs could be transported by ship, unloaded at some isolated port along the coast, and taken inland through uninhabited areas. There are many remote areas in this large State which could be used.

There is no real reason for the incinerator to be located at Koolyanobbing and no reason why the people of the Yilgarn and the eastern wheatbelt should be saddled with a PCB disposal incinerator they do not want.

Mr COWAN: I second the motion.

MR COURT (Nedlands) [10.43 pm]: I support the motion moved by the National Party. I believe the whole Koolyanobbing proposal is misconceived and the proposed site not suitable. I am not only concerned because the site is close to an agricultural area, but also because the Government's proposal fails to address the long-term requirement for disposal or storage of hazardous waste materials.

The motion specifically refers to PCBs, but a wide range of hazardous waste materials have to be destroyed in the State. The Minister for Health will agree that hospitals and other medical institutions dispose of low-level radioactive waste material in different ways. Whether or not we like it, we must face the problem of dealing with these hazardous waste materials and we cannot continue doing what has been done in the past, by Governments of all persuasions; that is, hide the problem or dispose of these materials in a haphazard way.

The previous speaker mentioned that the PCBs were being burned in the metropolitan area. I understand that they were burned at Welshpool and that a number of problems were associated with that process. In the past the PCBs have been stored in the middle of the metropolitan area and not only have these been disposed of in a haphazard way, but also some other types of hazardous waste materials, particularly those relating to the medical profession, have been disposed of unsatisfactorily.

Some proper action must be taken in the longer term. The Government proposes to construct this waste incineration facility at Koolyanobbing. I understand that the PCBs must be burned at a temperature exceeding 1 200 degrees centigrade; I am told that the temperature is critical and if it falls below that figure a further problem is created.

The Government intends to operate this plant for less than five years and has indicated that it will destroy the 1 000-odd tonnes of PCBs in storage and then remove the plant and rehabilitate the site. What happens then? We shall have other types of hazardous waste materials which must be disposed of or stored somewhere. We shall not have solved the problem. We shall have got rid of the current problem but not solved the longer-term problem.

I ask the Minister to tell us in his reply—if he has the information—just how many PCBs in storage have to be disposed of, where they are stored, and what other hazardous waste materials need to be disposed of. Bearing in mind the Minister's connection with the Health Department of Western Australia I ask him to explain exactly how the radioactive materials used in the health field are being disposed of.

The problem is not confined to Western Australia; it is an Australia-wide problem. I do not support the building of that facility close to

an agricultural area at Koolyanobbing. I will not get involved in an argument about where such a facility should be built except to say that I am under the impression that the Federal Government is also aware of this problem. I understand that a Senate Standing Committee or some other authority is currently preparing a report on this problem. Perhaps that can be verified.

Mr Taylor: They have been reporting on the matter for at least six years.

Mr COURT: The problem will not go away, it will remain, not specifically with PCBs, but with other waste materials. When Lucas Heights is closed some waste materials from that project will have to be stored. The Government is proposing to take short-term action to solve that particular problem. The time has come to provide a longer-term solution. This problem could be turned into an opportunity, if the place is located correctly geographically, is environmentally sound and properly designed. Some materials have to be stored; they cannot be incinerated.

The member for Kalgoorlie will be aware that people from his town have formed a development corporation. I do not know its specific name. One of the projects that these people are looking at is a proper incineration and storage facility. A site has been chosen where there are no mineral prospects and no people living within 30 km. It is suitable for building tunnels for storage purposes.

I am not saying that this is the place to have the incinerator. It might be in the Pilbara. But a site must be found which will not interfere with an inhabited area and which will handle the problem long-term. It will solve the problem of disposing of PCBs and other hazardous waste materials.

Koolyanobbing is not the site for such an incinerator. It should not be a short-term solution. We must not say that we will build an incinerator and take it away in five years. There is a problem in this country with the disposal of hazardous waste materials. We must find a longer-term solution, and it is possible in this day and age not only to design and construct such a facility, but also to find a location suitable for that facility in this State.

With those comments I support the motion before the House.

MR TAYLOR (Kalgoorlie—Minister for Health) [10.52 pm]: In reply to a number of important points, perhaps I should talk first of all about PCBs and exactly what they are. This is the information I have—

PCBs have excellent insulating properties, they are non-flammable and non-corrosive, and they are very stable over time. These features have led to their widespread use as heat exchange fluids in electrical equipment, and especially in transformers and capacitors. In such equipment the fluid transfers heat from the elements to the outer metal case of the equipment from which it is radiated to the surrounding air. The PCBs therefore prevent the equipment from overheating.

PCBs in transformers can be drained and replaced by other liquids. However, capacitors are sealed units and have to be punctured and placed into an incinerator in order to destroy their contents.

In relation to the question raised by the member for Nedlands regarding the size of the problem, I have this—

The bulk of PCBs in Western Australia are owned either by the State Energy Commission (SEC) or by the major iron ore companies in the Pilbara which have their own electricity generation systems. The SEC component totals an estimated 190 tonnes and consists of the contents of capacitors. About 36 per cent of these PCB-contaminated capacitors have been taken out of service and are in storage. The remaining 64 per cent is scheduled for replacement with new equipment by the middle of 1989. Virtually all of the capacitors both in storage and in use are located in Perth.

In fact none are in the Pilbara. To continue—

The mining companies generally removed PCBs from their transformers several years ago by flushing out the equipment with solvents and replacing the PCBs with other products. The waste PCBs were either disposed of at that time by incineration or are still in storage in Perth. However, a survey of transformers carried out as part of the present study has found that the contents of most of them have subsequently been re-contaminated with PCBs which were not removed earlier. The transformers therefore require further cleaning and the PCB-contaminated contents need to be disposed of. This

component of the waste stream totals an estimated 530 tonnes which is largely located in various Pilbara towns but the cleaning operation will have to occur in Perth where proper facilities are available.

The PCBs located in transformers in the Pilbara will be cleaned in the metropolitan area and not in the Pilbara. To continue—

Smaller quantities of PCBs are held by other bodies such as the Commonwealth and State Government agencies, other mining companies, foundries, etc. The total quantity of all PCBs in WA is estimated to be at least 1 000 tonnes including pure PCBs, cleaning solvents (kerosene), electrical equipment, soil, clothing and other items.

So that is the nature of the problem.

I would like now to look at the rationale which has been developed from the point of view of overcoming this problem. It is true to say, as the member for Nedlands pointed out, that in the last couple of years recognition has been given to the need to get rid of PCB waste by destruction or export. There have been instances, such as the situation at the South Fremantle power station, where contamination by PCBs has meant that part of the groyne at that power station will have to be lifted and the contaminated material removed.

In addition, one of the great problems which concerns me as Minister for Health, and also concerns the Minister for Environment, is the possible consequences of a fire in the vicinity of PCB storage areas such as a bushfire, or a fire in a shed which could lead to the production of dioxins and their dispersal over populated areas. It is that problem which stimulated the Government to ask Maunsell and Partners to investigate possible options for the disposal of those PCBs. I have personally been involved in a study concerning private enterprise and the Government in looking at a waste disposal incinerator, or the type of incinerator the member for Nedlands referred to—a national incinerator to be established in the eastern goldfields.

As it turned out, from the point of view of that proposal and from the point of view of union involvement, conservation involvement, and more particularly from the point of view of other States, it was not possible to proceed. In fact, the TLC put an embargo on the export of waste because of its concern that we would be getting rid of our problem by taking it to another country. It was felt that we should deal

with the problem ourselves. As far as waste being transported to other States is concerned, the other States would say, "It is your problem, you had better deal with it."

The member for Mt Marshall expressed concern about the consultative process. A large number of agencies have been involved. I will briefly mention the Government agencies, but I will expand on other people who have been involved in this consultative process.

The Government has involved the Health Department, the State Energy Commission, the Mines Department, and its explosives and dangerous goods division, geological survey, the Government Chemical Laboratories, and the Department of Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare. We also included the Trades and Labor Council, the Confederation of Western Australian Industry, the Office of Industrial Relations, and the Conservation Council. The Chamber of Mines was involved in the process of determining how to overcome this problem. That was the approach adopted by Maunsell and Partners.

In addition, when looking at sites, there was a meeting with the Shire of Yilgarn. The first meeting took place on 19 December. The report of that meeting gives the impression gained from the first meeting with the Shire of Yilgarn. The overall impression was that the proposal was received without undue alarm, and it would be given further thought once the PER was available to the public. This was expected to be on 12 January 1987. That meeting with the Shire of Yilgarn lasted well over an hour. In addition to that the shire held its own public meeting and it requested a further public meeting on that particular matter, which was attended at its request by the experts involved in that particular area, who addressed that public meeting to try to look at the quite genuine concerns of the residents.

The member for Mt Marshall referred to the residents on the track between Perth and Koolyanobbing. They were concerned that they had been involved. I must say that if they really feel that is the case, they must be deaf, dumb, and blind because there is no doubt that GWN, the ABC, and the newspapers right throughout the area, as well as the EPA, me as Minister for Health, the Minister for Conservation and Land Management, and the Minister for Minerals and Energy, all made statements on this particular matter.

Over the course of this year the matter has been the subject of a great deal of debate and comments from not only all those Ministers involved but also the media, so I do not know how they could possibly say they were not aware of the fact that the EPA review was under way, and they had the opportunity of making comments to that review. That review is still underway, and if those people want to continue to make comments, I am quite certain the EPA would be pleased to receive their representations.

Mention has been made as to what sort of plant we would have in this area. It is important to refer to the nature of the plant, and I quote as follows—

The plant site is small in area and will require only one hectare of land. This will be divided into an outer and inner zone. The outer zone will be fenced with a standard stock fence. The inner zone will contain the incinerator and associated equipment, and will be surrounded by a security fence. The plant will measure only about 30 by 30 metres.

PCBs will arrive at the site either in large drums or stored within electrical equipment. Both will be sealed within specially constructed steel containers. The containers will be unloaded and their contents removed automatically, using an overhead gantry. The drums and equipment will then be placed in an enclosed press which will crush them to the size which can be handled by the incinerator. The crushing will release the PCBs which will drain into a sump. The liquid PCBs will then be pumped from the sump to storage tanks from which they will be automatically injected into the incinerator. The crushed containers will move on to a conveyor belt and be automatically fed into the incinerator. After passing through the incinerator the burnt out containers will be disposed of into the adjacent quarry.

The off-gases from the incinerator will pass through a pollution control system before being discharged to the atmosphere through a chimney. The control system will remove hydrochloric acid and other by-products and will neutralise the discharge so that it will consist mainly of steam, carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide. The acid drawn from the control system is also neutralised by mixing with sodium hydroxide.

So in answer to the question by the member for Nedlands, that indicates the components of the discharge. To continue—

The entire plant site will be sealed with a concrete pad shaped in such a way that rainwater and any accidentally spilled PCBs would be channelled to a small drainage pond. Rainwater will evaporate from this pond but if it was contaminated with spilt PCBs, it would be pumped to the incinerator for disposal.

It is anticipated that the incinerator would need to operate for less than five years in order to destroy all PCBs available in Western Australia. The plant will then be removed and the site rehabilitated with native vegetation. The rehabilitation will include covering the landfill in the old quarry.

That is the nature of the plant proposed for this site.

Part of this motion deals with transport to the site, and that was one of the areas that caused some concern. It was for that reason that the report dealt in great detail with the nature of transport to the site itself. I quote again—

The proposal involves the transport of electrical transformers from the Pilbara to Perth where they will be emptied of PCB liquids, and transport of PCB wastes and electrical equipment from Perth to Koolyanobbing.

This transport will be subject to the provisions of the Dangerous Goods (Road Transport) Regulations 1983. As an extra precaution, all materials contaminated with or containing PCBs will be placed in specially built steel boxes designed to provide: A double containment of wastes; strong protection to reduce the possibility of rupture in the case of an accident; division of any truck load into small quantities so that any accidental spill is likely to be small.

It is anticipated that on average about one truck trip each week—

It says one each week in this document, but I was told today it would probably be one every three weeks. To continue—

It will be necessary for the wastes to be transported to Koolyanobbing from Perth mainly via the Great Eastern Highway. Relatively large quantities of materials classified as Dangerous Goods are already

transported on this highway, so the truck transporting PCBs would present a very small additional hazard to persons living near the road or to the environment which it crosses.

One of the very important components of PCBs is their inert nature, and it is the very inertness of PCBs that made them so attractive to the electrical transmission industry in so far as heat transfer is concerned.

In addition the report looked at contingency planning. I quote again—

Contingency planning in Western Australia for accidents involving vehicles carrying chemicals is provided by the WA Transport Emergency Assistance Scheme. That scheme co-ordinates the response of the Police Department, WA Fire Brigade, State Emergency Service and others to ensure rapid response and appropriate action.

In the case of PCB spill the necessary response is to first of all contain the spilt material; next to secure the contaminated area to ensure that no persons come into contact with the PCBs and that no unauthorised persons are in the vicinity; provide trained personnel to decontaminate the site; remove all contaminated materials including soils, road pavement etc.; properly de-contaminate any person involved in the clean-up; dispose of contaminated clothing through the incinerator.

All those matters in relation to the actual transportation of PCBs along Great Eastern Highway have been examined in this report and in my view they are adequately dealt with.

Overall one of the most important things that should be said about this proposal is what incinerator the Government would be looking at. The incinerator is in fact the world's smallest PCB incinerator, and the most modern incinerator in the world because it will be using the very latest standards that are available in the world.

The other very important thing is the buffer zone that will be made available around the site. That buffer zone will be 10 times bigger than the very biggest buffer zone that exists around any of these plants anywhere in the world, and there are something like 20 of these plants, all far larger than the one proposed in this report.

Mr Court: Are they next to agricultural regions?

Mr TAYLOR: They are virtually in the middle of towns, in the middle of agricultural regions, and in one case virtually in the middle of the city. The Government has gone further than that in this report, not only in terms of the buffer zone that has been set aside, but also in terms of the features that it considers are very important in choosing the area.

The following guidelines were set down by the EPA. The sites had to have each of these features—

Flat topography, with no risk of flooding, and are on very stable rock formation; no groundwater of importance due to high salinity; they are distant from any populated or environmentally significant areas; they are small and disturbed and have very little value for flora and fauna; there are no nearby National Parks, Nature Reserves or areas recommended to be set aside for conservation purposes.

Taking all these factors into account it was suggested that the Koolyanobbing area, which is almost entirely part of what is called the Brontie pastoral lease, was the best place to put this particular facility. The suggested site is some seven kilometres from Koolyanobbing, 22 kilometres from the nearest farm on the main road, and 46 kilometres from Southern Cross.

Mr Cowan: How far from the nearest farm?

Mr TAYLOR: It is 22 kilometres by road from the nearest farm. To continue—

Both sites have been used for extractive industries and are derelict hard rock quarries, eminently suitable for landfill. There are no current mineral tenements over the areas of interest.

One site is on publicly owned land while the other requires a small excision from a very large pastoral lease. There are no alternative development potentials.

A high degree of security is afforded by the remoteness of the sites. In addition, the facility will be fenced and have a person responsible for security in non-operational times.

A high quality road system is available from Perth to both sites.

Mr Court: What about the prevailing winds?

Mr TAYLOR: The prevailing winds are also said to be no problem. I have checked the wind direction.

Mr Court: The prevailing winds may lead back to the wheatbelt.

Mr TAYLOR: No, they do not. That is the point I am making. The very reason for keeping this site is the very reason that this sort of motion, particularly the first part of it which says there should be a mobile incinerator burning these PCBs on site in the metropolitan area, is really just not appropriate. In fact, it would be irresponsible for the Government to accept such a position, given those requirements for the nature of the site that has to be selected.

Mr Court: What happens when you take the plant away in five years' time?

Mr TAYLOR: I have just told the House that. Was the member for Nedlands not listening? We will take the plant away and fill in the area.

Mr Court: But what do you use to dispose of the hazardous waste?

Mr TAYLOR: We are getting rid of the PCBs.

Mr Court: In five years' time you will be worrying about the next problem.

Mr TAYLOR: There may well be another problem, and I will come to that in a moment; but the immediate problem is to dispose of the PCBs. We believe this plan is the appropriate one to dispose of the PCB problem we have in this State.

So far as hazardous wastes as a whole are concerned, I repeat that as the member for Kalgoorlie I had some involvement two or three years ago in a proposal for a national hazardous waste facility in the eastern goldfields area. The reason that proposal came to an end was not because of a public outcry. In fact, I was the chairman of a public waste committee that looked at the matter, and the more we got to know about the matter the further our concern diminished, because this is an area in which a little knowledge is dangerous and causes people a great deal of concern. I understand the concern members of the public have when they do not have the detailed information in front of them.

The reason the proposal came to an end was not to do with any public concern in the eastern goldfields—although there was some—but the fact that other States, principally South Australia, made it clear that they were not prepared to cooperate in the national hazardous waste facility in the eastern goldfields area. They believed such a facility should be established in the Eastern States where 90 per cent or more of this country's hazardous wastes are created and stored.

The Federal Government is continuing to examine the matter, and in a report on the "Quantum" programme on ABC television a few weeks ago the Federal Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment, Hon. Barry Cohen, made some comments about this matter. He said it is one of the most protracted and difficult matters he had had to deal with in his time as Minister, and that when he was appointed Minister he was determined to overcome the problem but had found that because of the NIMBY syndrome—that "not in my backyard" syndrome—it has been virtually impossible to overcome. He is working once again with the New South Wales and Victorian Governments to overcome the national waste disposal problem.

I believe that in Western Australia we have found an immediate solution to the problem of PCB disposals. I have a personal view—and I emphasise that it is a personal view—on this matter; one which has been developed in liaison with the Federal member for Kalgoorlie who has taken a real interest in the whole question of waste disposal, whether it be of PCBs, other hazardous waste, or even radioactive waste. Talking in particular about PCBs and hazardous wastes, the Federal member for Kalgoorlie and I agree that even though Koolyanobbing may not be the appropriate site and people around that area feel very strongly about it—and if they feel very strongly it would be unwise of any Government to say, "It is going there whether you like it or lump it," because I do not think we would get away with that—we believe there are other sites in that vicinity, between Coolgardie and Southern Cross, that may well have the same sorts of positive features that are being looked for by the Environmental Protection Authority.

Mr Cowan: I suggest you do, because the property you are talking about locating this particular waste disposal site on has a very large dam very close to it, and the owner of the property has been told he could not use the water for any purpose at all once that incinerator goes in there.

Mr TAYLOR: I am not sure whether he can or not. From a personal point of view I think we can find another site, but that does not do away with the problem raised by the member for Mt Marshall—the transportation of the waste from the site in the metropolitan area where it is stored to the site where it will be properly disposed of. I do not see the transportation issue as one that cannot be overcome. The way we can go about that is some-

thing that can be overcome from the point of view of any environmental or public health issues for the people along that highway.

Mr Court: If a private sector group in Kalgoorlie comes up with a proposal and a location that is suitable to you, and funds the whole exercise, would you then do away with the current proposal?

Mr TAYLOR: No, I would not, because the very basis of this proposal is that it is possible that it could be run by a private enterprise group with very strong Government controls. One of the great concerns of environmentalists has been that they would want to see any such facility run and operated from start to finish by the Government rather than by private enterprise.

Mr Court: There is no finish when it comes to hazardous wastes. They will always be there.

Mr TAYLOR: Yes, but the thing I pointed out to the other people involved in the eastern goldfields is that 85 to 90 per cent of the hazardous wastes in Australia today are created and stored in the Eastern States. It has been made quite clear by other State Governments, especially that of South Australia, that that is where those wastes should stay. They do not want to see the wastes transported across South Australia to Western Australia.

The other wastes we talked about are in some cases far more hazardous than PCBs. In fact, as I mentioned before, because of their very inert nature PCBs are not exactly hazardous materials. They do not burst into flames, nor do they automatically give off poisonous gases when they are split.

That is the big problem from the point of view of the development of a national hazardous waste facility anywhere in Western Australia, whether it be in the eastern goldfields or elsewhere. Could I add here that a group of people in the goldfields is interested in developing such a facility, whether it be in the goldfields or in the Eastern States. They think it is a worthwhile proposition to develop, and I would not discourage them from that point of view.

Mr Court: If they are going to build it, why should the taxpayer foot the bill?

Mr TAYLOR: They will not build it. As far as this one is concerned the amount involved is so small that it would not be worthwhile for them to build it. They would simply be taking money from the taxpayer and making a profit out of it.

Mr Court: You said you were going to build it and then pull it to bits.

Mr TAYLOR: That is right, because we will not need it after we have burnt those PCBs. There will be no further use for it.

From a very personal point of view, I am not fixed on that Koolyanobbing site. I believe there are other sites it would be possible to use, but I make it quite clear from the point of view of what is contained in this motion that any suggestion that we should use a mobile incinerator to dispose of these PCB wastes in the metropolitan area is one that I believe would amount to negligence on the part of the Government if it were to accept such a solution.

So far as the Government is concerned, the PCB solution is not one which will lead into a national proposal. Once the PCBs are dealt with the incinerator will be pulled apart, the site will be cleaned up, and that will be the end of the story.

As members of Parliament we all have to tackle this issue; it will not go away. Whether we are in Government for another 10 years or another two years, if this issue is not tackled by us someone at some time in the future will have to tackle it. It is a difficult issue but one which must be tackled by all of us. We could all make a lot of political capital by doing a bit of grandstanding throughout the countryside and working on the NIMBY syndrome—the “not in my backyard” syndrome. The fact is that such a facility must go somewhere and we as a Government, and all members as a Parliament, have the responsibility to establish this waste

disposal facility. It will be built, but whether it is built in Koolyanobbing or elsewhere is a matter that must be decided.

The EPA is still reviewing the matter, the environmental review process is taking place, and I believe the report from the authority should be available within the next couple of months or so.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Pearce (Leader of the House).

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Presentation to Governor: Acknowledgment

THE SPEAKER (Mr Barnett): Members, I have to announce that, accompanied by the member for Avon and the member for Victoria Park, this afternoon I attended upon His Excellency the Governor and presented the Address-in-Reply to His Excellency's Speech in opening Parliament.

His Excellency has been pleased to reply in the following terms—

Government House,
Perth, 3 June 1987.

Mr Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly:

I thank you for your expressions of loyalty to Her Most Gracious Majesty The Queen and for your Address-in-Reply to my Speech to Parliament on the occasion of the opening of the Second Session of the Thirty-Second Parliament.

GORDON REID,
Governor.

House adjourned at 11.20 pm

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

SOUTH WEST DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Overseas Visits

706. Mr BLAIKIE, to the Minister for The South West:

- (1) Would he give details of the number and cost of overseas visits by or organised by the South West Development Authority?
- (2) Further to (1), would he provide details of the nature of the visits?
- (3) In each year since its inception, would he provide details of any overseas marketing achievements directly attributed to the South West Development Authority?

Mr GRILL replied:

I will advise the member in writing once the information has been obtained.

ARTS: FILMS

Gold Industry: Broadcom

890. Mr HASSELL, to the Treasurer:

- (1) Referring to his reply to question 104 on 7 April 1987, were the general qualifications and capacities referred to in his reply not available in Western Australia?
- (2) Will the Western Australian Development Corporation and its subsidiaries consider Western Australian companies for any future promotions activity?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

- (1) As explained in the reply to question 104, Broadcom was appointed by GoldCorp Australia as it had specific advantages for the specific task in hand. GoldCorp Australia considered it in the best interest of the international marketing programme to appoint the best Australian company it could find to market the Australian Nugget.

The ten-minute trade launch video documentary has been acclaimed by gold dealers in the twelve international centres where national launches have been held in the past four weeks in the United States, Europe, and the Far East, as the best

video documentary ever produced in support of the launch of a gold bullion coin.

- (2) It is the policy of GoldCorp Australia to appoint Western Australian companies to undertake the company's advertising and promotional projects wherever possible.

PORTS AND HARBOURS

Fremantle: Stoppages

917. Mr HASSELL, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) How many stoppages have there been at the Port of Fremantle since 9 July 1986?
- (2) What were the dates of each?
- (3) What was the duration of each?
- (4) What was the subject of each dispute or issue?

Mr TROY replied:

- (1) to (4) In answer to the member's question 1 table three (3) schedules as follows—

Schedule A—stoppages and bans resulting from local issues—
Safety-other;

Schedule B—stoppages and bans which are the result of national issues;

Schedule C—stoppages and bans which are the result of national directives relating to apartheid.

Let me point out to the member that of the stoppages-disputes due to local issues, 14 out of 45 were over specific safety matters on particular jobs; the greatest number, 38 out of 49 were localised involving one or less ships in each case; 42 out of 49 were of less than one shift duration.

I am pleased to inform the member that stoppages-disputes due to local issues directly between the Fremantle Port Authority and its employees were minimal. Moreover, the FPA Combined Unions Association has over the period been involved in only one stoppage of an hour's duration, and this matter related to a meeting to discuss the three per cent productivity superannuation claim.

(See paper No. 181.)

MINISTERS OF THE CROWN

Government Employees: Positions

1013. Mr COWAN, to the Minister for Agriculture; The South West; Fisheries:

With respect to the Government's target of reducing total State Government employment by three per cent between 24 June 1986 and 1 July 1987, will he provide the following information about each of the various departments, authorities, and agencies within his portfolio responsibility—

- (1) What actual reduction in total employment—that is, permanent and temporary—is projected to be achieved by the due date?
- (2) How many existing positions have been reclassified—
 - (a) upwards;
 - (b) downwards;
 since 24 June 1986?
- (3) How many new—
 - (a) temporary;
 - (b) permanent;
 positions have been created since 24 June 1986?
- (4) How many—
 - (a) temporary;
 - (b) permanent;
 positions have been abolished since 24 June 1986?
- (5) Can he identify a saving, in real terms, in the total wages and salaries bill?
- (6) If yes to (5), how much has been saved?

Mr GRILL replied:

I refer the member to the answer given to question 1005.

MOSMAN PARK TEAROOMS

Jetty Licence

1043. Mr HASSELL, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Has he yet completed the jetty licence for the Mosman Park river tearooms development?
- (2) If no, why not?
- (3) When will it be completed?

- (4) What negotiations, discussions, or directions were given to him to make him break his promise given in question 336 of 1986 and question 308 of 1987 to table the licence document when completed?
- (5) What aspects are considered to be commercially confidential, and why?
- (6) Will the licence contain all the requirements, without exception, for the use of the premises, as indicated in his answer to question 336 of 1986.
- (7) If not, why not?
- (8) If so, how will he satisfy the public that he is keeping his promise if he fails to publish the jetty licence as previously promised?

Mr TROY replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) The final draft is being prepared by the Crown Law Department.
- (3) It is anticipated that it will be completed within a month.
- (4) It was drawn to my attention by the parties to the licence that there were commercial aspects where confidentiality should be considered.
- (5) Normal commercial practice permits consideration of confidentiality.
- (6) Yes.
- (7) Not applicable.
- (8) See (6).

SMALL BUSINESS

Duty-free Industry: Mini-Budget Effect

1064. Mr TRENORDEN, to the Minister for Small Business:

- (1) What impact will the Commonwealth Government's recently announced mini-Budget have on small businesses and their employees in the Western Australian duty free industry?
- (2) What action, if any, has he taken to represent the interests of Western Australian small business proprietors in the duty free industry as a consequence of such a drastic change to the taxation laws that affect the viability of their businesses?
- (3) What impact will the Commonwealth decision to reduce concessions for Australians returning home have on

local small businesses involved in the manufacture or distribution of goods that are sold through duty free shops?

Mr TROY replied:

- (1) Undoubtedly, the recently announced mini-Budget will have some impact on the duty free industry in this State. However, it must be appreciated that the measures are part of the Federal Government's overall economic strategy, and it is also important to recognise that the Federal Government's action in this area is but one measure to reduce the Budget deficit. Those measures have had immediate effect in the area of interest rates and can only benefit the majority of the small business sector in the long run.
- (2) At this stage it is difficult to measure the impact of the change in terms of the viability of the duty free industry, but any action I do take will be in the interests of the entire small business sector.
- (3) Initially, it would be expected the local small businesses involved in the manufacture or distribution of goods that are sold through duty free shops will probably experience a decline in sales. The same types of goods are available through other outlets, which will probably benefit from travellers electing to buy locally rather than purchase overseas under the new provisions.

TAXES AND CHARGES

Fuel Franchise Levy: Revenue

1069. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) What is the most recent indication of the amount of revenue that will be raised from the State fuel franchise levy in 1986-87?
- (2) What is the most recent indication of the amount to be paid in 1986-87 from the transport trust fund to—
 - (i) the Metropolitan (Perth) Passenger Transport Trust, trading as Transperth;
 - (ii) the Department of Transport;
 - (iii) the Main Roads Department?

Mr TROY replied:

- (1) The receipts for 1986-87 are estimated at \$96.4 million. This estimate however reflects receipts for fourteen months' instalments due to the change of collection implemented under the new scheme.
- (2) (i) \$44.5 million;
- (ii) \$3 million;
- (iii) \$45 million.

"AUSTRALIA II"

Western Australian Base

1081. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Tourism:

- (1) Has she initiated any actions in support of my campaign for *Australia II* to be permanently based in Western Australia?
- (2) If yes, what action has been taken and what results have been achieved?

Mrs BEGGS replied:

- (1) and (2) I have had discussions with the Commonwealth Government and advise that the ownership of *Australia II* passed to the Museum of Australia in March 1987. However, agreement has been reached that *Australia II* will be displayed in Western Australia by the Western Australian Museum until 1990-1991 or later, depending on the completion of the Australian museum's premises.

AGRICULTURE

Weeds: Declarations

1106. Mr SCHELL, to the Minister for Agriculture:

Is he taking steps to have—

- (a) the Mossman River and spiny burgrass weeds declared pest plants by the Agricultural Protection Board;
- (b) the implementation of a programme for the eradication of these weeds?

Mr GRILL replied:

- (a) No;
- (b) where feasible, cooperative control programmes are in operation.

POLICE OFFICERS

Clerical Duties

1118. Mr HASSELL, to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services:

Approximately how many police officers are engaged on secretarial and clerical duties full-time, and what percentage of total police manpower do they represent?

Mr GORDON HILL replied:

Police personnel records are not structured in a manner which enables the information to be readily available. Extraction and compilation of the information would take many hours of search and clerical effort.

However, a manpower optimisation committee is presently reviewing each portfolio of the Police Force, to identify non-operational duties carried out by police which could be tasked to civilian personnel.

POLICE COLLEGE

Establishment

1119. Mr HASSELL, to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services:

- (1) Has the 1982 plan to establish an Australian police college or academy in Perth been abandoned?
- (2) What is the current stage of discussions or negotiations between the Commonwealth and the States?
- (3) Have any plans been put in place to upgrade police training or police education?
- (4) If so, what are they?

Mr GORDON HILL replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Discussions have ceased.
- (3) Yes.
- (4) For promotional purposes, promotional assessment courses commenced on 23 February 1987. Three levels of rank are catered for:—
senior constables;
sergeants 1/c;
senior sergeants.

External Study units through TAFE are required for promotion at various stages of progression from constable to commissioned rank.

Senior training—by invitation to officer management courses at the Australian Police Staff College, Manly—both senior officers and executive officers' course.

Pre-Manly selection courses; Victorian police officers' course.

General training—

A restructured in-service programme commencing 1 July, 1987 aimed at providing training and education in specific modules or topics as dictated by operational and specialist needs.

TOURISM: HOLIDAY UNITS

Guilderton: Land Release

1120. Mr CASH, to the Minister for Lands:

- (1) Is he or his department aware of any applications which have been forwarded to his department requesting the release of land for the development of holiday units at Guilderton townsite?
- (2) Has advice been forwarded to his department by the Shire of Gingin indicating that the Guilderton Community Association has considered the proposal relating to the holiday units and agrees there is a need for such accommodation at Guilderton especially during the holiday period, and accordingly the Guilderton Community Association supports the release of suitable land for this purpose?
- (3) Is land available for such a prospect?
- (4) What action has his department taken to satisfy the obvious demand from the public and supported by the Guilderton Community Association?

Mr WILSON replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) A facsimile of the Shire of Gingin's letter referred to in the member's question was received in the Department of Lands Administration this week. The shire supports in principle land being made available for a caravan park and holiday accommodation units, and has suggested a meeting with senior officers of the department to discuss the matter further.

- (3) and (4) There is currently no land available for release for the purposes outlined in (2). However the position will be reviewed in discussions with the local authority.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Fremantle Children's Court: Facilities

1121. Mr CASH, to the Minister representing the Minister for Community Services:

- (1) Is the Minister aware of concern expressed by members of the legal profession and police officers at the lack of adequate facilities at the Fremantle Children's Court?
- (2) If yes, what action has she taken to alleviate this situation?
- (3) When did work commence or when is work to commence on this matter?

Mr WILSON replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) The Department for Community Services has, in concert with the Office of Government Accommodation, identified a number of alternatives which are designed to alleviate the situation. Investigations are expected to be completed shortly.
- (3) Work will commence as soon as possible on determination of the most satisfactory solution.

WA EXIM CORPORATION: ADVANCE

Catt Corporation Ltd: Security

1122. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Economic Development:

Further to question 848 of 1987, what security does the Western Australian Exim Corporation have over its \$280 000 advance to the Catt Corporation Ltd?

Mr PARKER replied:

The financial affairs of Catt Corporation, including Exim's loan to Catt and the security arrangements made at the time, are in the hands of a receiver-manager. It appears from the tenor of questions about Catt Corporation that the Opposition is seeking to generate publicity about Catt's situation—publicity that can only have an adverse impact on efforts to help this

manufacturer of excellent Western Australian products trade out of present difficulties.

MINERALS

Broken Hill Proprietary Gold Mines Ltd: Investments

1124. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Minerals and Energy:

Will Broken Hill Proprietary Gold Mines Ltd invest more funds in the Western Australian gold industry if its head office is attracted to Perth by the Government waiving stamp duty on the transfer of BHP Minerals Ltd's gold interests?

Mr PARKER replied:

The question is hypothetical.

TRANSPORT: PILOT BOAT

"Princess Royal": Sale

1125. Mr WATT, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Were tenders called recently for the sale of the former pilot boat at Albany, the *Princess Royal*?
- (2) On what dates did tenders close?
- (3) On each occasion, what was the highest tender?
- (4) On each occasion, how many tenders were received?
- (5) Has he directed that no tender be accepted?
- (6) Is the boat to be given to a metropolitan sea scout group or other groups?
- (7) Was the boat offered to Albany sea scouts; if not, why not?
- (8) Who will pay the cost of transporting the boat to Perth?
- (9) If the Government is to pay transport costs, how much is the estimate or quote?

Mr TROY replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) (a) 26 February 1987;
(b) 9 April 1987.
- (3) (a) No tenders received within the tender period;
(b) \$7 000.
- (4) (a) None;
(b) seven.

- (5) Yes.
- (6) A metropolitan scout group had submitted a tender. In view of the strong interest expressed by the scout group and considering the educational value of placing the boat with a community group of that sort, means of accepting its offer are being examined.
- (7) No. The Albany Sea Scout Group did not submit a tender; nor did it express an interest in purchasing the vessel.
- (8) Any costs associated with the transport of the vessel will be the responsibility of the purchaser.
- (9) Not applicable.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Redirection to Ministers

1126. Mr MENSAROS, to the Premier:

- (1) Referring to his personalised circular letter to members dated 27 May 1987, dealing with directing questions to Ministers, and considering his resolve—to which he is entitled—not to extend to members the courtesy of transferring the question to the appropriate Minister internally, so that it can be answered in time and publicly in Parliament, would he consider internally transferring those questions, the subject of which is not contained in any of the Statutes, or which are not as yet allocated publicly to any department or authority, such as the proposed residential rental legislation?
- (2) Would he extend the courtesy of internal transfer of questions in those cases where the gazettal about administration of Statutes, departments, etc., has either not yet occurred after a ministerial reshuffle; or where the gazettal contains errors?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

I will give consideration to this matter and advise the member in due course.

EDUCATION: PRIMARY SCHOOL

Waroona: Construction

1128. Mr BRADSHAW, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) Adverting to question 1050 of 1987, has the new primary school been built at Waroona?

- (2) If not, has a tender been let to build the school?
- (3) When is the expected completion date of the building of the new primary school?
- (4) What evidence has he that I have been telling the people of Waroona that the Government was not honouring its commitment to build a new primary school in Waroona?

Mr PEARCE replied:

- (1) to (3) Documentation is almost complete and tenders will be called shortly. The new buildings are programmed to be ready for the opening of the 1988 school year.
- (4) The member knows perfectly well that he has sought in both Parliament and the local Press to undermine confidence in the Government's commitment to this project since its inclusion in the 1986-87 Budget.

EDUCATION: PRIMARY SCHOOL

Waroona: Land Resumption

1129. Mr BRADSHAW, to the Minister for Works and Services:

- (1) Adverting to questions 1049 and 1050 of 1987, in view of the fact that the Education Department does not intend to build the new primary school at Waroona on the land resumed from Mr and Mrs E. Brooks, does he intend to offer the land back to Mr and Mrs Brooks in accordance with the Public Works Act?

- (2) If not, why not?

Mr PETER DOWDING replied:

- (1) I have received an application from Mr and Mrs E. Brooks for the resumed land to be returned to them in accordance with section 29A of the Public Works Act.
- (2) A decision on this matter will be determined in accordance with that Act.

COMMUNITY SERVICES: CHILDREN

Day Care: Regulations

1130. Mr CASH, to the Minister representing the Minister for Community Services:

What changes have been made or are proposed to be made to the day care regulations in respect of the following—

- (a) 0—3-year-old age group;
- (b) 3—6-year-old age group;
- (c) staff ratios?

Mr WILSON replied:

The Minister for Community Services is currently considering the report of the child care regulations review consultative committee, and no decisions have been made regarding changes to regulations.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Adoptions: Foster Placements

1131. Mr CASH, to the Minister representing the Minister for Community Services:

- (1) Is it departmental policy to have babies awaiting adoption placement cared for by mothers in foster homes?
- (2) If yes, can the Minister reassure the House concerning the quality of care given to those infants who are unfortunate enough not to be in a home situation?

Mr WILSON replied:

- (1) Yes, when suitable pre-adoptive foster homes are available.
- (2) Infants awaiting adoption who are not placed in pre-adoptive foster care are cared for at Ngala Mothercraft Home and Training Centre Inc. The quality of care is very satisfactory. However, a family setting is preferred.

SPORT AND RECREATION

Cycle Accidents: Children

1134. Mr CASH, to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services:

- (1) Is he aware of concern expressed in the community about the number of children accidentally killed or injured on the roads due to bicycle accidents?

(2) Does he or his department support the compulsory wearing of protective headgear by children riding bicycles on roads?

(3) If yes to (2), does he intend introducing such legislation?

Mr GORDON HILL replied:

This question has incorrectly been addressed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. It has been referred to the Minister for Local Government, and he will answer the question in writing.

EDUCATION

Learning Centre Link: Submission

1135. Mr CASH, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) Is he aware that a recent submission made by Learning Centre Link for an education coordinator and secretary was refused?
- (2) Is he aware that with 35 learning centres in Western Australia, the task performed by Link on a voluntary basis is becoming impossible and not practical?
- (3) Will he reconsider his decision?

Mr PEARCE replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) and (3) I am aware of the work undertaken by the Learning Centre Link and have approved a grant of \$5 000 for 1987-88. However, the State's difficult budgetary situation for 1987-88, which is compounded by severe restrictions on Commonwealth Government funding, has limited the capacity to provide further assistance.

HEALTH

Contraception: School Syllabus

1137. Mr CASH, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) In view of the article on page 6 of the *Daily News* on 12 May 1987 with respect to sex education, will he make available the addendum to the K-10 health education syllabus which states that the teaching of contraception is no longer part of the year 7 course?

- (2) Is there also an addendum to the K-10 health education syllabus which states or implies that the objective of sex education is "to promote abstinence and the delaying of first sexual intercourse"?
- (3) If yes to (2), will he provide a copy for my reference?
- (4) If no to (2), could he advise why there is no mention of this objective in the K-10 health education syllabus?

Mr PEARCE replied:

- (1) There is no such addendum. "Teachers background information only", about contraception, now appears in the revised health education teachers guide, year 7.
- (2) No. An objective already exists in the K-10 syllabus that deals specifically with the postponement of sexual intercourse and resisting pressures to be sexually active.
- (3) and (4) Not applicable.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Safety House Association: Support

1142. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister representing the Minister for Community Services:

- (1) What support has the Government given to the Safety House Association of Western Australia since its inception in 1983?
- (2) Has the Government received a request from the association for further financial assistance?
- (3) Has a decision yet been made with respect to that request?
- (4) If so, what was that decision?
- (5) If not, when is it anticipated a decision will be made?

Mr WILSON replied:

This question has been incorrectly addressed to the Minister for Community Services. It has been referred to the Treasurer, and he will answer the question in writing.

LAND

Crown: Legislation

1143. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Lands:

Does the Government intend to legislate for, or is it considering making, changes to the manner in which Crown land is treated in Western Australia?

Mr WILSON replied:

Yes.

PLANNING LEGISLATION

Draft: Introduction

1144. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Planning:

Referring to question 827 of 1987 concerning the review of current planning legislation, when is it expected that the draft new legislation, which was adopted by the State Planning Commission on 5 March 1987, will be introduced into the Parliament?

Mr PEARCE replied:

I am presently studying the details of the proposed planning legislation as submitted to me by the State Planning Commission.

Subject to the approval of the Government for drafting of a Bill, it would be my intention that the new legislation be introduced into the Parliament during the spring sessions this year.

EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

Apprentices: On-the-job Examinations

1145. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Labour, Productivity and Employment:

- (1) What was the basis of his edict that final on-the-job examinations cease for all apprenticeship trades State-wide, when the Industrial Training Advisory Council decided that the new method of assessment would only apply to twelve apprenticeship trades on a pilot basis for 1987?
- (2) Subsequent to the edict being implemented in February 1987, have any industry groups signified opposition to the new measures?
- (3) Has any industry group offered to conduct the final on-the-job examinations at no expense to the Government and,

if so, how does he justify his statements to the effect that said examinations are not cost effective?

- (4) Has any industry group stated that the new assessment measures could pose a potential risk to the health and welfare of the community, and will most certainly lead to a diminution in the quality of the operatives serving the community?
- (5) Is it a fact that the Government intends to change the apprenticeship regulations to make it mandatory for indenturing employers to transfer their apprentices at their own expense to other employers should, in the opinion of the Government, the employer not be training the apprentice in all aspects of the industry?
- (6) Is it a fact that the new method of assessment comprises a questionnaire sent out to both the employer and the apprentice, and is it not also true that the Government has no intention of increasing the numbers of apprenticeship officers who will be necessary if there is to be even a modicum of supervision on the part of the Government as to the ongoing training delivered?
- (7) How many apprentices will complete their term between 28 February and 30 December 1987 and, in the light of his edict that all final-on-the-job examinations cease, how are these apprentices being effectively assessed as to their competency and what criteria is being used as a benchmark?
- (8) Is it a fact that the division of industrial training has been emasculated and the positions of director and deputy director downgraded to that of manager and assistant manager and, if so, what was the justification for doing so?
- (9) Is it a fact that the licensed trades of plumbers and gasfitting are signatories to an international reciprocity agreement and have indicated to him and his officers the concerns of other countries participating as to the cessation of final on-the-job examinations?
- (10) Is it a fact that the by-law liaison committee of the Western Australian Water Authority unanimously

rejected the cessation of final on-the-job examinations and conveyed opposition in writing to him, and does that committee not comprise representatives of the Public Health Department, Building Management Authority, Royal Australian Institute of Architects, the Building Surveyors' Association, the Institute of Plumbing, the Master Plumbers' Association, the Housing Industry Association, and the Master Builders' Association?

- (11) Will he give an unequivocal guarantee that there will not be any attempt on the part of the Government to supplant any apprenticeship trade with traineeships and, further, will he give an undertaking to ensure that the world-recognised standards of excellence demonstrated by graduating apprentices in this State will not be diminished as a result of the current initiatives?
- (12) Is it a fact that all trade advisory boards have not met for the last six months even though his department has now got in place the new assessment programme?

Mr PETER DOWDING replied:

The information requested will take some time to collate. When it becomes available, the member will be advised in writing.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Allocation

1147. Mr MacKINNON, to the Premier:

Will he detail how much was allocated for advertising of the 1986-87 State Budget?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

There is no total allocation for advertising in the State Budget. I am advised by Treasury that the estimate for all department and instrumentality advertising—except classified advertising—for 1986-87 is \$10.5 million, a decline of about \$750 000 over the previous year. The figure includes Tourism Commission, Lotteries Commission, State Energy Commission, State Government Insurance Commission, and the Western Australian Water Authority.

GOVERNMENT INSTRUMENTALITIES

Advertising Budget

1148. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Will he advise what was the total budget allocation for this financial year for Westrail's commercial advertising?
- (2) What was the budget breakdown for radio, newspaper, and television advertising?

Mr TROY replied:

I refer the member to the answer to question 1147.

GOVERNMENT INSTRUMENTALITIES

Advertising Budget

1150. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Industry and Technology:

- (1) Will he advise what was the 1986-87 budget allocation for commercial advertising within the Department of Industrial Development?
- (2) Will he detail the separate amounts allocated for radio, newspaper, and television advertising?

Mr BRYCE replied:

See reply to question 1147.

GOVERNMENT INSTRUMENTALITIES

Advertising Budget

1151. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Minerals and Energy:

- (1) What is the total budget allocation for commercial advertising for the 1986-87 financial year for the State Energy Commission?
- (2) Could he provide a breakdown of this budget into amounts allocated for radio, newspapers, and television?

Mr PARKER replied:

See reply to question on notice 1147.

EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING
DEPARTMENT*Apprenticeship Officers*

1152. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Labour, Productivity and Employment:

- (1) How many apprenticeship officers are currently employed by the Department of Employment and Training?

(2) What is their role?

(3) Will their role change under the new apprenticeship training and assessment scheme to be introduced by 1988?

(4) If so, how will that role change?

(5) How many of those officers will be employed after the introduction of the scheme?

Mr PETER DOWDING replied:

The information requested will take some time to collate. When it becomes available the member will be advised in writing.

HOMESWEST

Eviction Notices

1154. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Housing:

What are the procedures through which Homeswest proceeds prior to issuing eviction notices to tenants?

Mr WILSON replied:

The eviction process is detailed, and I will write to the member outlining the process in full.

ENERGY

Gas Pipeline: Dongara-Perth

1155. Mr LAURANCE, to the Minister for Minerals and Energy:

Is the State Energy Commission negotiating to purchase the Dongara to Perth pipeline?

Mr PARKER replied:

Discussions on the future of the Dongara gas field and pipeline are taking place between the commission and CTAS participants.

GAMBLING: LOTTERIES

Timespool: Legality

1157. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister for Racing and Gaming:

(1) Has she received the Crown Law Department's opinion regarding the legality or otherwise of Timespool conducted by the *Sunday Times*?

(2) If so, will she please table this opinion?

Mrs BEGGS replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) No. The Crown Law opinion was obtained on behalf of the Lotteries Commission and has been forwarded to the chairman of the commission.

WA EXIM CORPORATION

Business Migration Programme: Participation

1159. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Economic Development:

- (1) Is the Western Australian Exim Corporation participating in Australia's business migration programme?
- (2) Who is the executive responsible for this programme within Exim?
- (3) How many other staff members are involved?
- (4) How many people have been attracted to Western Australia under this scheme in 1987?
- (5) What is the average amount of money each person is committed to investing in Western Australia?

Mr PARKER replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Ms Lesley Maher.
- (3) Two.
- (4) An investment trust being established by the Western Australian Exim Corporation is not yet in operation.
- (5) Intending business migrants participating in the Exim trust will be required to deposit a minimum of \$A500 000.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Non-housing Construction

1160. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Economic Development:

- (1) What was the level of non-housing construction activity in Western Australia for January to May 1986 and January to May 1987?
- (2) What are the Government forecasts for non-housing construction activity for 1986-1987 compared with 1985-1986?

Mr PARKER replied:

- (1) Based on ABS statistics on building approvals relating to total non-residential building, activity in the first

quarter of 1987 was up 56 per cent on the same period in 1986—\$224 004 000 against \$143 438 000. Comparative figures for the months of April and May are not yet available.

- (2) It appears that, based on the first three quarters of 1986-87, non-residential building activity in 1986-87 will be broadly in line with activity in 1985-86.

PETROCHEMICAL PLANT

Location

1162. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Minerals and Energy:

- (1) Has the company Petro Chemical Industries Ltd indicated to the Government where it plans to build its petrochemical complex?
- (2) If yes, what locations have been suggested?

Mr PARKER replied:

- (1) Petro Chemical Industries Ltd is carrying out a study into the feasibility of installing a petrochemical complex in Western Australia. As part of its obligations under that study, Petro Chemical Industries Ltd is considering the optimal location of the facility. The company is presently considering a number of potential locations between Kwinana and Bunbury.
- (2) Petro Chemical Industries Ltd has not yet reached a conclusion on the optimal siting. It will not be in a position to advise on site location until its studies are complete.

ARTS

Films: Budget

1163. Mr COURT, to the Minister for The Arts:

- (1) What was the total budget for films made in Western Australia in the years—
 - (a) 1982;
 - (b) 1983;
 - (c) 1984;
 - (d) 1985;
 - (e) 1986;
- (2) What is the estimate for 1987?

Mr PARKER replied:

- (1) Exact figures are not immediately available. Estimates are as follows—
 - 1982-83—\$8 million
 - 1983-84—\$8 million
 - 1984-85—\$7.9 million
 - 1985-86—\$2.8 million
- (2) The estimate for 1987-88 is \$18.8 million.

AGRICULTURE: FARMERS

Mandurah Estuary: Changes

1164. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Conservation and Land Management:

- (1) Has the State Government contacted any farmers in the Mandurah Estuary catchment area to suggest that they change—
 - (a) the way the they farm;
 - (b) what they farm?
- (2) If yes, how many farmers have been approached?

Mr HODGE replied:

While the EPA and the Department of Agriculture have been working together on the management of the Peel-Harvey catchment, advice to farmers is primarily a responsibility of the Department of Agriculture. Therefore, I have referred the question to the Minister for Agriculture, who will reply in writing.

ECONOMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Members

1165. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Economic Development:

Who are the members of the Government's economic planning committee or "Think Tank" recently announced?

Mr PARKER replied:

We have not announced any "Think Tank". The composition of the proposed Economic Development Council has not yet been decided.

TECHNOLOGY

Research and Development Park: Murdoch University

1166. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Industry and Technology:

- (1) Is the Government supporting the establishment of a research and development park at Murdoch University?
- (2) If yes, what assistance has been given?
- (3) How many research groups have been attracted to this development?

Mr BRYCE replied:

- (1) The Government has not been requested to support the establishment of a research and development park at Murdoch University.
- (2) No State assistance has been given to date.
- (3) I understand that Murdoch University is still negotiating the establishment of a number of research groups to the park.

WA EXIM CORPORATION

Business Migration Programme: South Africans

1167. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Economic Development:

- (1) Has Exim Corporation Ltd been approached by many business people from South Africa wishing to emigrate to Western Australia under the business migration scheme?
- (2) If yes, how many of these applicants have been successful in coming to Australia under this scheme?
- (3) Has the Federal Government been helpful in making arrangements for these people to emigrate to Western Australia?

Mr PARKER replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) and (3) Not applicable.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Concrete: Sales

1168. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Industry and Technology:

- (1) Does the Government have statistics available for concrete sales on a monthly basis for the years 1985, 1986, and to June 1987?

- (2) If yes, what are the forecasts for the balance of this year?

Mr BRYCE replied:

- (1) and (2) Statistics on concrete sales are not kept by the Department of Industrial Development.

EDUCATION

Kuala Lumpur University Campus

1169. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) Is the Government assisting Western Australia's tertiary institutions in planning the establishment of a university campus in Kuala Lumpur?
- (2) If yes, at what stage are these proposals?

Mr PEARCE replied:

- (1) I have given support to this proposal.
- (2) Preliminary stage.

TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT FUND

Assistance

1173. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Industry and Technology:

- (1) What financial assistance has been provided by the Technology Development Fund to Western Australian businesses in the years—
- (a) 1984;
- (b) 1985;
- (c) 1986;
- (d) 1987?
- (2) How many companies have been assisted in each of these years?
- (3) In what form has this financial assistance been provided?

Mr BRYCE replied:

	\$
(1) (a) Year ended 30/6/84	125 000
(b) Year ended 30/6/85	909 092
(c) Year ended 30/6/86	1 180 746
(d) Year to 30/5/87	1 320 335
(2) (a) 1;	
(b) 15;	
(c) 18;	
(d) 28.	

- (3) Business planning grants, equity investment, project finance loans produce refinement loans, and infrastructure equipment purchases.

TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENTS

Staff: Redeployment

1174. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Industry and Technology:

- (1) How many senior staff employed or who were employed by the Technology Development Authority, the Technology Directorate, or the Department of Industrial Development have decided not to work for the new Technology and Industry Development Authority?
- (2) How many of these officers have transferred to other positions within the Public Service?
- (3) How many have returned to the private sector?

Mr BRYCE replied:

- (1) to (3) Any staff changes resulting directly from the formation of the Technology and Industry Development Authority will take place once the relevant legislation currently before Parliament is passed. These changes will be made in conjunction with the Public Service Board, following consultation with the Civil Service Association.

Any staff movements from the three agencies mentioned by the member to either the private sector or to elsewhere in the Public Service have occurred as part of the normal turnover of staff.

SUPERANNUATION BOARD

Developments: The Anchorage

1175. Mr COURT, to the Treasurer:

- (1) Is he aware that proposals for the Anchorage development could result in cutting the free-flowing section of the Swan River from 210 metres to 90 metres?
- (2) Is this necessary for the development to be viable?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

- (1) and (2) I am not aware of the situation referred to by the member but understand an ERMP prepared in relation to the project is open to public comment until 3 August, after which the EPA will make recommendations relating to the project.

As previously stated, the project will have to comply with all necessary approvals from the relevant authorities. The Superannuation Board will not obtain favoured treatment in obtaining those approvals. The approval process will be exactly the same as for any private development involving a project of this nature.

SUPERANNUATION BOARD

Developments: The Anchorage

1176. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Has he agreed to the Anchorage developers constructing jetties up to 70 metres from the high water mark?
- (2) If yes, when was this approval given?
- (3) Has his department examined the effects of such a decision on the ecology of the Swan River?

Mr TROY replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) No. However, under the normal environmental review procedures, the developer must satisfy any requirements of the Environmental Protection Authority to provide information on environmental consequences of the development.

DEFENCE

Submarine Construction Contract: Caucus Report

1177. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Defence Liaison:

- (1) Is he aware of a paper prepared by the Caucus defence industry committee which highlighted misgivings about the selection of the submarine design and builder by the Federal Government?

- (2) If yes, is the State Government satisfied with the procedures that were followed for this project?

Mr BRYCE replied:

- (1) The existence of such a paper has been reported in the media.
- (2) The State Government has had no involvement in the selection of the submarine design and builder. The State's effort was directed at the assembly site decision, and submissions were placed before each of the competing contenders.

PASTORAL LEASES

Statistics

1178. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Lands:

- (1) How many pastoral leases are in Western Australia?
- (2) How many of these leases are in the—
 - (a) east Kimberley;
 - (b) west Kimberley;
 - (c) Pilbara?
- (3) Are there currently any boundary disputes between the Department of Lands Administration and the pastoral owners?
- (4) If yes, how many are in dispute?

Mr WILSON replied:

- (1) 530.
- (2) (a) and (b) 87;
(c) 72.
- (3) Yes.
- (4) Only one to my knowledge.

PASTORAL LEASES

BTEC Programme

1179. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Agriculture:

How many pastoral leases estimated by his department are not in compliance with the BTEC programme?

Mr GRILL replied:

Four pastoral leases.

HOSPITALS

Contract Cleaning

1180. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Has the Health Department estimated the savings that could be made by introducing contract cleaning into the hospitals under its control?
- (2) If yes, what are the estimated savings?
- (3) When will the Government introduce contract cleaning into the hospitals under its control?

Mr TAYLOR replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) Contract cleaning is already used in a number of Government hospitals.

PASTORAL LEASES

Aboriginal Organisations

1181. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Lands:
How many pastoral leases in Western Australia are controlled by Aboriginal organisations?

Mr WILSON replied:

There are 22 pastoral properties held by, or for, Aboriginal organisations.

TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Annual Report

1185. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Industry and Technology:

- (1) Since the Western Australian Technology Development Authority's annual report for 1984-85, dated 30 June 1985, signed by the Auditor General on 3 October 1986, was tabled on 19 May 1987, why was the 1984-85 audited report tabled 23 months after the year ending?
- (2) When will the 1985-86 report be tabled?
- (3) Does late lodgement indicate financial problems in the authority?

Mr BRYCE replied:

- (1) The results of the operations of the Technology Development Authority for 1984-85 were included in the Auditor General's second report to Parliament dated 1 November 1985 in a recast format.

Discussions between Treasury and the Auditor General then took place over a protracted period with regard to the format and presentation of the accounts. Once the format had been approved and the Auditor General had issued his report, the annual report was presented to the authority's board of management, presented to the Minister, and tabled in Parliament.

- (2) The Auditor General has issued his opinion on the financial statements for the period ended 30 June 1986. This opinion is unqualified. The report of the board of the authority will be presented at its next meeting, and the report for 1985-86 will then be forwarded to the Minister and subsequently tabled in Parliament.
- (3) No. At all times the Technology Development Authority has operated within Budget allocations from the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

SUPERANNUATION BOARD

Investments: International Fisheries

158. Mr MacKINNON, to the Treasurer:

I refer to question 639 dated 29 April.

- (1) Does the Treasurer recall the answer to that question, where I asked in part—

- (1) Has the State Superannuation Board invested in a business known as International Fisheries?

- (2) When was that investment made?

The Treasurer said, "See reply to question 391"?

- (2) Is he aware that the answer to question 391 was, "The member is referred to the Speaker's ruling on Superannuation Board questions of Tuesday, 28 April 1987."
- (3) Is he further aware that in the ruling of 28 April the Speaker said—

These matters refer to the State Superannuation Board and are clearly sub judice. To prevent any prejudice to the rights of every citizen of this State to a fair trial,

I rule that debate on these matters shall not be permitted until the conclusion of the trial.

- (4) What has the investment by the State Superannuation Board in International Fisheries to do with the court case he mentions?
- (5) How was it in any way sub judice, and how is it that question cannot be answered?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

- (1) to (5) From what the Leader of the Opposition has said, the answer would be that at the present moment nothing to do with the sub judice ruling is reflected in the question about International Fisheries, or whatever other firm it is.

I cannot answer the question immediately. A mistake may have been made in referring to that answer.

In answer to the question the Leader of the Opposition now pinpoints, if he puts it on the Notice Paper I will answer the question for him. I will answer the question he has asked tonight. I am not saying I will answer the question if some question of the sub judice rule is touched on.

TRADING HOURS LEGISLATION

Representations

159. Dr WATSON, to the Minister for Labour, Productivity and Employment:

- (1) As the Minister responsible for the proposed amendments to the Bread Act and the Retail Trading Hours Act, has he received recent representations on both these pieces of legislation asking the Government to reconsider decisions it has made.
- (2) When will the legislation be proceeded with?

Mr PETER DOWDING replied:

- (1) Consultation on both these legislative proposals has been going on for a very extended period of time.

In relation to the Bread Act, recent representations through the members for Collie and Warren—

Mr Crane: And Moore!

Mr PETER DOWDING: The member has been representing too, has he?

Mr Crane: My word I have!

Mr PETER DOWDING: They have requested the Government to give further consideration to that Act. On that basis I have agreed to postpone the introduction of the legislation pending further consultations.

In relation to the Retail Trading Hours Act, a new and substantial submission has been received from a group relating to the proposed composition of the retail traders advisory committee, and I have agreed to consider a revamped committee.

- (2) The member asks when the legislation is likely to proceed. I can only say at the moment that in view of the Government's heavy legislative programme it is not now likely that either will proceed in this session.

Mr MacKinnon: That is the trading hours legislation?

Mr PETER DOWDING: Yes.

PORTS AND HARBOURS

Commercial Marine Industry, Fremantle

160. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Transport:

When questioned last evening by the member for Nedlands about the proposed new harbour for the commercial marine industry at Fremantle, adjacent to the Fremantle Sailing Club marina, the Minister indicated that the facilitation of a number of operations was linked to the Anchorage project.

- (1) Is the proposed harbour linked to the Anchorage project?
- (2) If so, in what way?
- (3) Will any financial contribution to the new harbour be made by the Anchorage developers?

Mr TROY replied:

- (1) to (3) There is a linking inasmuch as there are four lesses in the present area who must be considered, and certainly the accommodation of those in an alternative position would require some consideration of the financial aspects, and that is the condition which colours this matter at this stage. However, there is a long-term requirement

for that type of facility, which is in a very preliminary stage of planning at this time.

WATER RESOURCES

Harris River Dam: Funding

161. Mr EVANS, to the Minister for Water Resources:

Is the Minister able to give any details of progress towards obtaining Commonwealth financial assistance to enable the construction of the Harris River Dam?

Mr BRIDGE replied:

This is one of the most important questions which has been asked in this place for a long time, and I think the members from the south west present here would be keen to know about the progress of this particular project.

I am sure that most members would understand the priority that the State Government has accorded to the project. It has been given a No. 1 priority for some time in the Government's capital works programme and is a project within the State for which the Government has made that determination.

The member will recall I made a visit to Melbourne in April of this year. The purpose of that visit was to discuss with the Federal Minister for Resources and Energy, Senator Gareth Evans, a number of proposals for a strategy to provide water to the rural sectors of this State. The question of the Harris River Dam was at the top of the list. I stressed to the Minister that as far as the State Government and the people of the south west were concerned, the project ought to be given the highest priority. I was impressed by the response of the Federal Minister, and I gained a clear impression that he understood this and would be keen to do all he could to support this Government's endeavours to get the Harris River Dam project up and running, having regard to the financial situation of the nation.

I understand there are fairly firm plans for the Minister to visit Western Australia later this year. I would hope on that occasion the Government

would be able to arrange for him to visit the Harris River Dam site, and hopefully during that visit the Minister would be in a position to give some clear indication as to the likelihood of funding becoming available.

So that is where the project stands. It has a very high priority with respect to a decision of the Commonwealth, as it does as far as this Government is concerned. Hopefully with all those things put together, it is likely there will be an early and favourable decision in respect to the construction of the dam in the near future.

SUPERANNUATION BOARD

Investments: The Anchorage

162. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Can the Anchorage project proceed without the new harbour that I referred to in my previous question?
- (2) If yes, where will the waterside facilities now used by industry in that area and supervised by the Minister's department be relocated?

Mr Brian Burke: The member would have to ask the developer. It is not the Minister's responsibility. The Government has not made any decisions about the Anchorage.

Mr TROY replied:

- (1) and (2) As Minister for Transport, I have certain obligations in relation to marine and harbours activities. At this stage there has been no decision made with regard to the development referred to by the Leader of the Opposition. I am not in a position to answer whether there are alternatives to it or not, and if the member cares to put such questions on the Notice Paper, I will attempt to provide him with the details he asks for.

WATER RESOURCES

Denmark: Problem

163. Mr STEPHENS, to the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) Is the Minister aware of the serious water supply problem to the Denmark town site?

- (2) Could the Minister indicate the stage the planning has reached to alleviate the problem?

Mr Brian Burke: If you showed a bit more interest in it and were a bit more strenuous in your representations—

Mr STEPHENS: I have been in constant communication with the Minister. That is why he is aware of the problem. I have made him aware.

Mr BRIDGE replied:

- (1) and (2) The member for Stirling will recall that some time ago I was able to visit the town of Denmark and see at first hand the difficulties being experienced by the people. I talked about several possible measures that could be put in place to ease the situation there.

There is a plan to put in place an 80 000-cubic millimetre excavated tank that is to be constructed by local contractors. The time frame that is currently being looked at is September or October of this year. It is proposed to fill the tank from water drawn from Scottsdale Brook during the winter period. The advice of the authority was that this seems to be the most effective way to overcome the problem.

A number of other alternatives are still being pursued with respect to other locations and using water resources other than the particular option which I have just outlined, but currently that is what the Government is proposing to do with respect to the town's needs.

Mr Stephens: You mentioned that you wanted to fill the tank from the brook before the winter. Could you expedite the construction of the dam, because in October winter is over and it would be too late for the summer. It is important that the town has it for the summer.

Mr Brian Burke: If you had shown more interest in the matter, the Government might have got it out of the blocks quicker. Do you want us to come to your electorate and fix up every problem before we even find out what it is? That is what you are there for, to report it to us. You are too busy

in your internal party machinations; you are too busy trying to spill your leader.

Mr Stephens: I asked the question completely without notice and was able to get a reasonable response because of the manner in which I—

Mr Brian Burke: It was without notice. We did not even know you were interested in it; we had no idea.

Mr BRIDGE: It looks as though there will not be any problem in accommodating the member's concerns. We will investigate the points raised by the member for Stirling, and look at the rain pattern to see if we can do anything about that.

Mr Bryce: And we can make rain—don't worry about that.

Mr BRIDGE: There are a few rain dancers around the country, I can assure members of that. We will explore that possibility. I would like the member for Moore to help me there because he is very good at those rain dances. I will also have a look at our timetable to see if we can do something in that regard as well.

SCM CHEMICALS LTD

Relocation: Kemerton

164. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Minerals and Energy:

- (1) What is the estimated expense to the Government, in money or kind, for the relocation of SCM Chemicals Ltd to the Kemerton site?
- (2) Who will own the land on which the existing plant is located?
- (3) Who will be responsible for clearing that land?
- (4) Is the Minister confident that the Government will be able to overcome the objections of the Harvey Shire Council to the relocation?

Mr Brian Burke: Full credit to the Minister for a marvellous job.

Government members: Hear, hear!

Mr PARKER replied:

- (1) As I indicated to the House in answer to the question from the member for Mitchell yesterday, an amount of money has been negotiated with SCM Chemicals Ltd, and that amount will

be revealed to the House and to the public fairly soon. There are some matters of commercial sensitivity applying to SCM Chemicals Ltd, and those are being finalised before any public announcement is made. That is the only thing holding it up, as I indicated yesterday. Maybe the member for Nedlands was not listening.

Mr Court: Can you give us an estimate of how long it will be before the announcement is made?

Mr PARKER: It will be announced in the next couple of weeks but, as I said last night, the amount concerned is very substantially less than the amount which previously was talked about in relation to the cost to Government of encouraging the moving of this plant.

(2) The Government will ultimately own the land currently occupied by the plant.

(3) The company will be responsible for any on-site environmental clean-up. In accordance with legislation passed by this Parliament last year, the Government is responsible for the taking away of the pipeline across the estuary and for all matters outside the plant's boundary. That dates back to the agreement made in 1961, which created the problem in the first place.

(4) At its meeting with me yesterday morning, the Harvey Shire Council indicated a willingness to consider seriously the viewpoint I put to it, and a preparedness to talk to officers both of my department and of the Environmental Protection Authority, and any other relevant departments, about that matter. I find it hard to believe that a council operating for the benefit of its ratepayers would not accept the necessary rezoning of the Kemerton site because the site is infinitely superior from the point of view of the council's ratepayers. I would have thought the environmental aspect alone would be sufficient to make virtually automatic the approval of the site by the Harvey Shire Council. The 1 000 or so ratepayers of the Harvey Shire Council, and a number of them from other shires, would have been adversely affected by the Australind development in terms of

the potential risk to them, whereas at the Kemerton site there is no additional risk imposed on those ratepayers.

As well as that, the economic benefit in having the site at Kemerton is substantial. We are talking about \$155 million being spent on the project there, and about \$50 million a year in extra export income, another 36 jobs over and above what would have been the case at Australind, and so on.

All those factors should persuade the Harvey Shire Council to add the additional land use classification for this plant at the Kemerton site. I cannot think of a single reason why the shire would not do that, so to that extent I am confident, and I hope my confidence is fulfilled.

MINING: KIMBERLEY

Comments: Hon. Tom Helm

165. **Mr BLAICKIE,** to the Minister for Minerals and Energy:

I refer to Press reports of a speech made by Hon. Tom Helm in the Legislative Council on Thursday, 30 April 1987, appearing on page 920 of *Hansard*, wherein the member criticised Peko-Wallsend. The member said—

Exploration licences are to be exploited in the Kimberley with little or no regard for the traditional owners of the land.

The member was referring to the Aboriginal Heritage Act.

(1) Has the Minister checked the statement for accuracy?

(2) What action does he propose, if any?

Mr PARKER replied:

(1) and (2) I am glad the member for Vasse asked me that question, because it is an interesting story. I was not familiar with the speech that Hon. Tom Helm made in the Legislative Council relating to his concern about the activities of the operations of Geopeko—the exploration arm of Peko-Wallsend in the Kimberley. It was not reported anywhere, to my knowledge.

Mr Blaikie: It was on the ABC.

Mr PARKER: I did not hear it, and no-one drew it to my attention, except that subsequent to the speech the very first occasion on which it was drawn to my attention was when the company's exploration manager for Western Australia, Mr Sherrington, wrote to me in terms of grave concern calling on me to dissociate myself and the Government from Hon. Tom Helm's speech, and to oppose what he had said on the basis that it was not true.

In the routine way that letter was referred to my department for a draft response and advice to me on the issues involved. That was the very first occasion on which my department had been apprised of that issue. It was one of the hundreds of letters that come in that would have been dealt with in the normal way.

Mr MacKinnon: You had better talk to your Media Monitoring Unit if it failed to draw that to your attention. They are slipping.

Mr PARKER: The Leader of the Opposition will find out. Somewhat to my surprise I received a very hasty response from my departmental officers who, upon seeking to inquire as to the import of both Hon. Tom Helm's speech and the letter from Mr Sherrington, came up against Mr Sherrington in trying to obtain information from him, with no success. They also did some investigations of their own and came back to me saying they believed from the information they had been able to gather—and they are departmental officers—that what Hon. Tom Helm had said in the Legislative Council appeared to be correct and they were very gravely concerned about the activities of Geopeko in the Kimberley region. As a result of that they recommended to me that I write to Mr Sherrington instructing his company to suspend all its exploration activities in the Kimberley region until further notice. I accepted that advice from them and wrote such a letter to Geopeko instructing the company to suspend all its exploration activities in the Kimberley.

Mr MacKinnon: What evidence do you have for that?

Mr PARKER: The evidence of the officers of my department in two respects. The first was the information they had been able to gather. The reason they were seeking the information, of which they had not previously been aware, was to try to draft a response and advice to me on the basis of Mr Sherrington's letter. In the course of that they became aware, according to the evidence they could get at that stage, that there was a considerable basis for what Hon. Tom Helm had said.

Mr MacKinnon: What evidence? You have just said a lot of gobbledegook that said nothing.

Mr Brian Burke: The department investigated it, you goose.

Mr PARKER: Dr Kelly, the director general of the department, came to me and said, firstly, that his department had investigated the matter and there was evidence to support the claims Hon. Tom Helm had made. Secondly, in their attempts to gain information from the company, the company had refused to provide them the information they sought. As a result of that Dr Kelly recommended to me, and I accepted the recommendation, that we should suspend the exploration activities of the company in the Kimberley region. I did that last week—from memory I think it was on 27 May—and yesterday I received an urgent facsimile from the head of the company's exploration activities Australia-wide, whose name escapes me for the moment, in which he indicated that he accepted the order to suspend the company's exploration activities and wanted to have urgent discussions with my department to see what could be done to correct the situation. Indeed, from the information he provided to me it was obvious that he had, at least to some degree, recognised that there were things which should be discussed. There was quite a flurry of activity in the two or three days after my letter was sent out.

At the moment, my understanding is that those discussions are being arranged between my department and the gentleman concerned from Sydney, whose name I cannot recall. If necessary, I will become involved in those discussions, but at present it is something which is happening entirely at a departmental level. As I said, it was quite interesting that, had it not been for Mr Sherrington's letter—for which I am very grateful—my department would not have been aware of the problems associated with this exploration project in the Kimberley.

The SPEAKER: Before I call on the next member, I was a trifle tardy in getting to the right part of the Standing Orders relating to this question. The Standing Order is No. 127, which actually precludes members from asking questions such as the one which was just asked.

I was quite happy to let it go because it was halfway through before I found the Standing Order I wanted, but I urge members to try not to frame questions which contravene that Standing Order.

SPORT AND RECREATION

Cycle Riding: Safety Helmets

166. Mr HOUSE, to the Minister for Local Government:

- (1) Is the Government proposing to legislate to make the wearing of helmets by people riding bicycles compulsory?
- (2) If not, can the Minister explain his objections to such a proposal?

Mr CARR replied:

- (1) and (2) The Government's position is, first of all, that it is most desirable that cyclists wear safety helmets. There is a whole quantity of evidence to the effect that the head is the part of the body which is most likely to be seriously injured through an accident while riding a bicycle. The Government certainly strongly encourages the wearing of safety helmets.

With regard to making this compulsory, I think it is probably a desirable long-range plan, but the simple situation in the short-term is that it would not be practical to enforce the compul-

sory wearing of helmets by cyclists and, in particular, by child cyclists. To some extent the Government would want to adopt the type of strategy that was adopted in respect of wearing seatbelts when, at a time when very few people were wearing seatbelts, there was an extensive campaign of encouragement which led to a much higher level of the wearing of seatbelts and, ultimately, this was made compulsory.

It seems appropriate for the Government to deal with this matter in the same way. If we made the wearing of helmets compulsory for cyclists tomorrow, it would be simply unenforceable in terms of the cost and the police officers available. In the short-term the Government is engaging in a campaign of encouragement, which is as extensive as possible. The Government is also examining measures which it hopes will be effective in bringing about a far higher level of the wearing of helmets by cyclists.

The Government very strongly supports this and will seek the compulsory wearing of safety helmets a fair way down the track.

Mr HOUSE: There is an enormous cost to the health system in this State by people who are injured in bicycle accidents when they are not wearing helmets.

Mr CARR: There is no argument about that. I make it clear that the Government would certainly support the wearing of helmets in every possible circumstance. If the Government thought making this compulsory tomorrow would be likely to be effective, it would do so. The simple reality is that it would not work to make it compulsory at a time when probably 10 or 20 per cent of cyclists wear helmets.

PORTS AND HARBOURS

Fremantle: Disputes

167. Mr HASSELL, to the Minister for Transport:

I thank the Minister for his detailed answer to question 917 concerning stoppages at the Port of Fremantle,

which indicates that there have been significantly over 100 stoppages at that port since 9 July last year, continuing the previous pattern. In the stoppages which are listed under the category of "alleged safety disputes", were the people involved paid?

Mr TROY replied:

I cannot give an accurate answer as to the payment of those people or not, but there are certain industrial practices which were agreed to by both parties on the waterfront in respect of safety matters. I am quite conscious that the payment question is under those guidelines, but I certainly will determine exactly what the circumstances were and let the member know. However, I take the opportunity to say that his assertion that the continuation of disputation in Fremantle is significantly over any level is completely without foundation. Everyone on the waterfront in Fremantle at the moment is very pleased with the minimal level of disputation which has occurred. It is

quite wrong, even with a simple mind, to simply take up the number of disruptions which may be for the minimum period or not. The member for Cottesloe needs to look very carefully at the statistics for the total of stoppages that have occurred, and he will find there is a very favourable trend in the Port of Fremantle which is acknowledged by every party down there—both from wharfside labour and employers.

I am in constant contact with both sides involved in waterfront activity, and I can assure the member for Cottesloe that there is a very good climate in the Port of Fremantle.

Mr Hassell interjected.

Mr TROY: Did the member for Cottesloe look at the records which were given to him last July and make a comparison? No, the member chose not to do so. I suggest he looks at them.
