

# Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 1 October 1981

The SPEAKER (Mr Thompson) took the Chair at 10.45 a.m., and read prayers.

## CULTURAL AFFAIRS: FILM

### *"Caligula": Ministerial Statement*

MR HASSELL (Cottesloe—Chief Secretary) [10.48 a.m.]: I seek leave of the House to make a statement concerning the screening of a film in Western Australia.

Leave granted.

Mr HASSELL: Under an agreement with the Commonwealth approved by the Censorship of Films Act, 1947 the censorship and classification of films for exhibition in this State is dealt with by the Censorship Board of the Commonwealth. The purpose of the arrangement is to achieve a uniform system of censorship for the whole Commonwealth of Australia.

However, as a result of dissatisfaction in this State with certain decisions which have been made to allow films to be shown in this State, which were regarded as unsuitable for public exhibition, Parliament in 1976 amended the Censorship of Films Act by adding a new section 12B, which retains a residual power in the State Minister to prevent the screening in this State of a film considered to be unsuitable.

The relevant provisions of section 12B are as follows—

Notwithstanding that any film has been approved by the censor, and regardless of the classification assigned to that film or of any appeal relating to the application, the Minister may, if he is satisfied that such is necessary in the public interest, direct that a classification assigned to a film pursuant to section 12 of this Act shall be ineffective in the State and if such a direction is given . . . if the Minister refrains from assigning a classification to the film, it shall be deemed to be an unapproved film for the purposes of this Act.

There has been considerable public speculation and interest in relation to the film "Caligula".

In the circumstances, I considered that it was necessary in the public interest that I should give particular consideration to the screening of this film in Western Australia, notwithstanding that it has been approved for screening by the Commonwealth Censor, with an "R"

classification and after certain modifications were made to the original film.

Although they have no official standing under the Censorship of Films Act, I requested the members of the State advisory committee on publications, together with officers of the Liquor and Gaming Branch of the Police Department, to view the film "Caligula" and to advise me in relation to that film.

It was the unanimous view of the five members of the State advisory committee on publications and two officers of the Liquor and Gaming Branch of the Western Australian police that the film "Caligula" should not be screened in Western Australia, and they have advised me accordingly.

I attach to this document and I will, with leave, table a summary of the views of the State advisory committee.

In view of the advice which I have received, I have directed that the classification "For Restricted Exhibition"—(R)—assigned to the film by the Commonwealth censorship authorities shall be ineffective in the State, and I have refrained from assigning to the film any classification in lieu.

The film is thereby deemed to be an unapproved film under the Censorship of Films Act 1947-1979.

I table this report on the screening of the film "Caligula" which is a summary of the views of the five members of the advisory committee on publications who, at my request, viewed the film and gave advice on it.

*The report was tabled (see paper No. 479).*

The SPEAKER: At this point I would like to indicate to the House that the Minister has taken advantage, for the first time in this House, of a Standing Order which was inserted in the Standing Orders last year, and I draw members' attention to Standing Order No. 118A. It is under that particular Standing Order that the Minister has taken the action he has.

## LAND: BRIXTON STREET

### *Petition*

MR WILLIAMS (Clontarf) [10.51 a.m.]: I have been asked to present the following petition—

The City of Gosnells has an uncompleted Contract (made with the S. A. Miskavicz Decd. Estate in 1967) to purchase approximately 1 5/8 acres of land for road construction, being part of Lot 105 Park

Street, Kenwick. The road (part of Brixton Street and approximately ½ acre in area) was constructed in 1966 and the remaining area of over one acre was to be set aside for public benefit.

We the undersigned humbly request Parliament to urgently take whatever action is necessary to ensure that this uncompleted Contract is completed and that the Community do not lose for all time the benefit of this acre of land on the North-eastern side of Brixton Street.

And your Petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray that this humble Petition be acceded to.

The petition bears 218 signatures and I have certified that it conforms with 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. 97.)

### EDUCATION: FUNDING

#### *Cutbacks: Petition*

MR COWAN (Merredin) [10.52 a.m.]: I present the following petition—

We, the undersigned, deplore the education budget cuts affecting government schools in Western Australia and as parents demand that education services in Government schools in real terms in 1981-82 and the future are provided at not less than the staffing and funding levels applying in 1980-81.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that you will give this matter earnest consideration and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

The petition bears 16 signatures and I have certified that it conforms with 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. 98.)

### HOSPITALS: SUNSET

#### *Petition*

MR COWAN (Merredin) [10.53 a.m.]: I wish to present another petition which is in the following terms—

To The Honourable Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia in

Parliament assembled, we, the undersigned residents in the State of Western Australia do hereby pray that Her Majesty's Government will not sell the Sunset Hospital site which should be preserved for the benefit of present and future generations.

We further affirm that the care of the elderly is best conducted in a manner which does not permit the making of profits from their distress.

We are of the firm belief that land handed down by our pioneers in trust to the care of Governments for the benefit of later generations should not be disposed of for temporary financial gain.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that your honourable house will give this matter earnest consideration and your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

The petition bears 87 signatures and I have certified that it conforms with 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. 99.)

### EDUCATION: FUNDING

#### *Cutbacks: Petition*

MR TRETHOWAN (East Melville) [10.54 a.m.]: I have a petition from 147 citizens from the Applecross area which reads as follows—

We, the undersigned Parents and Citizens of Applecross area, urge the Government to budget sufficient funds to the Education Department in future to allow it to continue to operate schools and services at the same level as in 1980-81.

Your petitioners humbly pray that you will give this matter earnest consideration and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

I certify that the petition conforms with 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. 100.)

### LEAVE OF ABSENCE

On motion by Mr Shalders, leave of absence for three weeks granted to Mr Young (Scarborough) on the ground of ill health.

#### **BILLS (4): INTRODUCTION AND FIRST READING**

1. Appropriation (Consolidated Revenue Fund) Bill.
2. Appropriation (General Loan Fund) Bill.  
Bills introduced, on motions by Sir Charles Court (Treasurer), and read a first time.
3. Small Claims Tribunals Amendment Bill.  
Bill introduced, on motion by Mr O'Connor (Minister for Labour and Industry), and read a first time.
4. Agriculture and Related Resources Protection Amendment Bill.  
Bill introduced, on motion by Mr Old (Minister for Agriculture), and read a first time.

#### **WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND ASSISTANCE BILL**

##### *Second Reading*

**MR O'CONNOR** (Mt. Lawley—Minister for Labour and Industry) [11.00 a.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

In April of this year I introduced a Bill into this Parliament which fulfilled the Government's undertaking to re-write the present Workers' Compensation Act.

The Bill did not proceed before the session concluded so I invited further submissions from interested parties. As a result of this, in addition to over 15 submissions, the Government received a request from the Trades and Labor Council for the establishment of a tripartite committee to consider aspects of the Bill.

As members would be aware, the Government agreed to the tripartite meetings and a consensus was achieved on the major contentious points. I am pleased now to present a new Bill which effectively incorporates the agreed changes.

Before outlining these changes, I consider it important to recapitulate on the overall context and intent of this Bill. Members would recall that I emphasised the need for clearly defined objectives in relation to the intent of this Bill. In this regard, the Government is clear that workers' compensation legislation should provide substantially for some of the economic consequences of a work-caused disability and facilitate the re-entry of a worker into gainful employment. The legislation is not, however, intended to compensate for pain, suffering, or loss of enjoyment of life.

The scope of this legislation in conformity with the intent as outlined encompasses the following aspects—

the Bill applies to all individuals properly classified in a somewhat broad sense as workers who have an employer responsible for their conditions of work and with the right to exercise some control over the manner in which the worker performs the task he is employed to do;

the Bill provides for compensation in respect of disability or death for which the work of the employer was in some way responsible or which resulted from an accident in the course of the work without wilful or serious misconduct by the worker;

the Bill provides for the financial support of dependants of a worker when death unfortunately follows a work-caused disability;

the Bill establishes procedures in relation to rehabilitation to ensure the speedy assessment of rehabilitative needs and implementation of an appropriate programme; and,

the judicial function and administrative duties of the Workers' Compensation Board have been separated.

Currently there is no co-ordinating authority to oversee the operation of the Workers' Compensation Act and ensure uniformity of its administration.

The workers' assistance commission will be established as the co-ordinating authority to ensure uniformity of administration in regard to the Workers' Compensation Act. It will be structured with representation of employers, employees, insurers, and Government. I consider it is essential from an awareness point of view that interest groups are able to experience at first hand the problems and costs associated with this important area and contribute positively to the providing of solutions.

This does not mean that the judicial function will diminish. Members will be aware that the work load in this area increased to such an extent that in 1978 the Government took the positive step of establishing a supplementary board in order to reduce the backlog of claims which at that stage were exceeding six months in waiting time for a hearing.

As a direct result of the success achieved by the supplementary board appointed by the Government, the Bill provides for the future appointment of a supplementary board to be made on either a full-time or other than full-time basis. This will introduce a further degree of

flexibility in meeting fluctuations in future claim levels.

The existing tripartite nature of the Workers' Compensation Board will be retained. The jurisdiction of the board also has been enlarged to enable disputes between employers and insurers to be dealt with. I am sure members would agree that the processing of all aspects relating to a claim in one jurisdiction will result in benefits to all parties.

Perhaps one of the most significant features of the Bill relates to changes in the "prescribed amount". Under the present Act, as members would be aware, the formula by which this amount increases each year has resulted in a telescopic effect which bears no relation to the percentage increase in award rates of pay. I am sure members would agree that this is unreasonable, particularly when comparison is made with the prescribed amounts in other States.

The Bill provides for the present prescribed amount of \$58 885 to be increased annually by the sum obtained from multiplying the percentage increase in the weighted average award rate for adult males under Western Australian State awards by \$46 000 until this is exceeded by cumulative increases of the \$46 000.

The Government believes that the Bill combines successfully a rationalisation in the level of the prescribed amount without the trauma associated with a reduction in the level of benefits applying.

The Government has assessed carefully the implications of the Dunn proposal to reduce a worker's weekly earning entitlement to 85 per cent, and it has decided to retain the provisions in the existing Act. This means the 100 per cent level of weekly earnings which includes over-award and service pay as defined in the Act will remain.

Another important element concerns the establishment of an age limit in respect of eligibility for workers' compensation. At present there is no limit to the age at which a person can receive compensation in respect of a work-caused injury. Members would agree that compensation is intended to assist financially a worker who, through a work-caused disability, is unable to earn. It is not, and cannot be considered, as a pension in the same nature as social services. Workers' compensation is intended as assistance to enable rehabilitation and re-entry into the work force to proceed without financial hardship. By its nature, then, workers' compensation should cease when the injured worker's earnings would cease through retirement or some other cause.

The Bill provides for entitlement to compensation to cease at age 65 years. However, in order that workers suffering disability after age 64 years are given an opportunity to stabilise their situation, a period of one year has been allowed for payment of weekly compensation from the date of disability. This ensures that at whatever age the accident occurs, the worker will be entitled to not less than one year's compensation. The Government has extended this provision further to enable a worker who can show that, but for the injury, he would have continued in employment beyond this age, to receive a supplementary benefit up to age 70 years if appropriate.

Workers suffering from pneumoconiosis represent an area of particular need, because of the special nature of this disease; and the Government has acted to assist this group accordingly.

The failure of legislation to provide for the automatic adjustment of benefits, particularly in the current economic climate, has concerned the Government for some time; and, for this reason, the Bill includes provision for dependent benefits to be adjusted on an annual basis and, further, that the level of benefits for children under 16 years be increased by in excess of 100 per cent.

Members would be aware of the disparity which exists between the States in relation to the level of benefits paid for second schedule type injuries. I do not intend to dwell on this area, but I consider it is important that the extent of variation be shown. The maximum benefits available in the States for specified injuries are New South Wales \$31 000; Victoria \$23 260; Queensland \$34 020; South Australia \$20 000; and in this State \$58 885.

This indicates the level at which the benefits have been set for Western Australia.

Mr Brian Burke: Thanks to the Tonkin Government.

Mr O'CONNOR: Thanks to increases as they have gone along; but as the Leader of the Opposition knows, they have become out of proportion with the other States.

Mr Brian Burke: Probably they are out of proportion with us. That has led, to some extent, to unemployment.

Mr O'CONNOR: May I say we have been responsible for some of the unemployment; but because of the tremendous increase of 700 per cent, the premiums rose to \$12 million in 1974 and \$84 million in 1979. In many cases, that

meant a loading of something in excess of \$1 000 on the workers.

Mr Brian Burke: Since 1979 they have been fairly reasonable.

Mr O'CONNOR: So since 1979 it has had no effect on unemployment.

Mr Brian Burke: I am perfectly happy with that.

Mr O'CONNOR: When this is extended to individual injuries the extent of difference becomes even more pronounced, as for example in the case of loss of an arm below the elbow. The benefits payable are New South Wales \$20 650; Victoria \$16 280; Queensland \$13 580; South Australia \$16 000; while in this State the benefit is \$47 108.

Members would agree that for any degree of standardisation to be reached throughout Australia, a proper basis acceptable to all States is needed. Of necessity this must reflect the level of disability determined by the medical profession; and this is the basis the Government has used in this Bill. From the examples given, members would appreciate that benefits in this State are considerably higher than those in all other States.

The Government has created a fourth schedule to the Bill which provides for situations involving the loss of functions due to employment as distinct from industrial diseases as specified in schedule 3. The Government is firm in the belief that provision for compensation must exist in relation to cardiovascular and cerebrovascular incidents where the incidents can be related to work causes.

I am sure members would agree that the application of legislation in this area is not meant to be fortuitous on whether the incident occurs at work or home, but must be related to work being a causal factor. The expansion of the definition of disability will enable workers suffering from a heart attack or stroke to claim when it can be established work was a contributing factor to the heart attack or stroke and contributed to a recognisable degree regardless of where it occurs.

Provision has been made in the Bill to overcome the situation created for workers employed in this State who are, by the terms of their contracts, required to perform work outside Australia for periods not exceeding two years by providing coverage in this regard. Members would agree that in the event of a worker being required to spend less than two years outside Australia, provision for compensation purposes would be reasonable.

Premium rates in this State are determined by the premium rates committee, which currently

sets a maximum rate for various industries. At the present time insurers are able to allow premium discounts and good risk rebates, but they are not permitted to load a premium where an employer has a bad accident history. This means that safety conscious employers, particularly the smaller ones, may not be getting the fullest economic advantage from their efforts.

The Government has often stated its concern at the high cost of industrial accidents. The proposed legislation provides for the creation of recommended premium rates which may be discounted or loaded to a maximum of 50 per cent. This proposal is seen as a real incentive for employers to introduce and maintain effective safety programmes.

Workers have been inconvenienced in the past by argument between employers as to liability based on whether an injury is a recurrence or a fresh accident. The argument by its nature does not involve the worker because it presupposes entitlement to compensation from some source.

A delay in payment to a worker is unreasonable if there is no argument as to entitlement. The Bill therefore provides that the employer at the time of the fresh accident or recurrence is required to pay compensation until the board resolves argument as to which employer is liable.

Provision exists in the present Act restricting a worker who obtains a judgment for damages from commencing or continuing a claim for compensation. This does not specifically cover the situation where a settlement occurs in relation to damages.

The Bill provides clarification in this regard by enabling the worker to proceed with a claim for compensation in any event. However, it compels him to bring to account moneys received by way of damages.

The Bill provides that where judgment for damages is given to a worker in respect of injury by accident, the employer may have compensation already paid to the worker deducted from the damages. It further compels the court to apportion the recovery of compensation by the employer as against the worker in the proportion that the worker's contributory negligence bears to that of a defendant third party.

The Bill before the House includes a provision to regularise publication of decisions on substantive applications in the form of a quarterly gazette.

The Bill contains only minor adjustment to the provisions in the Workers' Compensation Act relating to industrial disease. However, I would like to place on notice the Government's intention to examine in detail developments in this area,

with a view to ensuring that presently unforeseen diseases do not cause a repetition of problems which have occurred in the past. In addition, the matter of lump sum compensation for noise induced hearing loss is being studied as part of the Government's agreement. That was an agreement we made also with people from Midland Junction and the TLC prior to bringing the Bill to the House.

In summary, this Bill has been necessitated by the inability of legislation created at the beginning of the century to adequately cope with the problems confronting a community in the 1980s. It is an answer to the community's call for positive action and the Government's response in 1978.

The Bill has progressed through a series of stages and at each of these consultation occurred with those most involved, even to the extent of my withdrawing the Bill presented to this House in April. The Government has had the benefit of the most qualified advice and has provided adequate opportunities for people to participate in and contribute to discussion.

The review indicated that the community considered emphasis in this area should change from compensation to rehabilitation. It was clear also that legislation should be geared to enable re-entry of a worker into employment at the earliest possible time.

The Bill provides for—

- separation of the judicial and administrative function;

- the Workers' Compensation Board having increased flexibility;

- a workers' assistance commission charged with the responsibility of administering the Act;

- emphasis on rehabilitation and re-entry of a worker into employment;

- protection of the financial rights of the individual worker;

- more realistic dependant benefits;

- variation to the prescribed amount; and

- coverage for work related heart attacks.

The Government believes that the areas of this Bill upon which I have touched and other provisions contained in it will assist in providing a frame work for the efficient and effective establishment of an equitable workers' rehabilitation and compensation system for Western Australia.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Brian Burke (Leader of the Opposition).

## METROPOLITAN WATER SUPPLY, SEWERAGE, AND DRAINAGE AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)

### Second Reading

Debate resumed from 30 September.

**MR MENSAROS** (Floreat—Minister for Water Resources) [11.20 a.m.]: I cannot refrain from wondering that after so many Opposition speakers yesterday to this comparatively small measure—

Mr Brian Burke: The million dollar man.

**Mr MENSAROS**: I have only just started and already he interjects. After so many speakers yesterday I noticed that only six Opposition members seem to be interested in my reply. The approach taken by members of the Opposition to this Bill is not surprising. It is an approach spurred on, not by their constituents, but by their real master, the trade union movement. They have been told to make more noise in Parliament, to be more vociferous, and to be more noticeable.

They must have had a problem, because had they opposed the Bill outright it would have implied they were in support of cutting off water supplies, which even the Opposition admits is somewhat less humane than restricting supply. However, had they agreed to the measure they might have been accused of being soft or weak. They had to devise another method, therefore, of tackling the problem and did so by introducing an amendment, albeit the Leader of the Opposition and some other speakers did say they still opposed the measure.

On the surface the Opposition's amendment appears all right. In an endeavour to gain some public support they announced their amendment in advance rather than in the course of debate in the Parliament. They made an announcement to the Press so as to obtain some kudos.

I intend to examine the criticism levelled against the measure and also the amendment which the Opposition chose as its main way to tackle the Bill. I propose to examine the amendment from the point of view of a business utility; in other words, from the point of view of the cost benefit.

The cost-benefit approach has been the one taken by the Opposition against the MWB on many occasions, even though it has not done it in a way that the cost and the benefit sides would have come together. We should not forget that we heard very virulent criticism about alleged

insufficient services by the board coupled with an advocacy of better services. At the same time, when it came to that part of the year when charges were being assessed and announced, we heard criticism from the Opposition that the charges were too high. I will put these two points together in a proper approach from the cost-benefit point of view; after all, what the Opposition wants is a better service for less money, and I do not disagree with the endeavour. This is precisely what I advocate and this is precisely the way I want to approach this subject, without sprinkling my argument with snails or emotional issues such as references to single parents.

Mr Brian Burke: Don't you think they are important?

Mr Bryce: He doesn't have them in Floreat.

Mr MENSAROS: I do not want to use such magnificent adjectives as those used by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. He was so rapt with the "sudden death" approach that I made a tally of the number of times he used that term. I noted he used it on nine occasions, and I may have missed some references to it so the total could have been higher. But he based his speech on using this magnificent adjective of "sudden death".

Mr Brian Burke: You are really devastating.

Mr MENSAROS: I would like to take the proper approach to consider whether we could get better services for less money if we were to do what the Opposition suggested. Firstly, I would like to repeat briefly what I said yesterday. Before examining the merit or otherwise of sending out second reminders, I draw the attention of members to the fact that I asked for assistance from the board in this matter and in its examination of the subject it was not able to detect a single piece of legislation relating to any sort of utility, whether it be a water or electricity utility, or Telecom, in the whole of Australia where the legislation covering that utility contained any provision relating to the issuing of first or second notices.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition suggested we should adopt the same practice as that used by Telecom. However, I should like to point out other utilities do not restrict themselves in the manner in which they collect bad debts by writing into legislation specific provisions in this regard. Were they to do this, they would restrict themselves unduly, by outlining exactly the practice they would use to collect bad debts. It is important that utilities are able to exercise flexibility in their collection of bad debts.

The MWB and, I am sure, other utilities certainly examine constantly the method by which bad debts or, indeed, debts of any sort, can be recovered in the most efficient way.

Members should be aware that, when the MWB strikes the rate at which water will be charged, it assesses the amount of money it will need for the following year; it is essential also particularly today that consideration be given to the cash flow. Previously when money was not as expensive as it is today, it was possible to say, "I need a certain amount of money, but it does not matter when it comes in". However, it is vital that, in this day and age, the board should have the ability to determine in advance its cash flow, because interest on outstanding money amounts to approximately 1.25 per cent a month. Therefore, it can be seen all the money which is not collected at the correct time is really interest forgone—that is, money lost—and because of this it might be necessary for the board to strike a higher rate in order to achieve the amount of income it requires.

The MWB examines constantly the best way in which it can recover outstanding money. It takes steps to prevent delays in payment of accounts and it implements its policies through administrative action. Therefore, if the board came to the conclusion that it would be a benefit costwise to send out reminder notices, as some other authorities do, it would adopt that practice on an administrative basis, but it would not want to incorporate such a policy in its legislation.

I assure members that methods of debt collection are examined constantly. Indeed, I have just attended a meeting of a working party which is held regularly. Present at the meeting were representatives of non-domestic MWB ratepayers who have been examining more satisfactory methods which can be adopted in regard to rating as well as recouping outstanding moneys. Consideration is given to the most practical methods available and, as mentioned by the member for Merredin, practices adopted by local authorities in regard to the collection of rates and debts are examined. I am aware of only one local authority in the metropolitan area which offers discounts for the early payment of rates. A number of local authorities charge interest on amounts which are received after the due date.

The MWB examines all sorts of alternatives and takes steps to implement those which are practical. For example, the board looked at the system used by Australia Post under which people on low incomes are able to purchase stamps which act as a saving towards the payment of their accounts. However, the board realised that if it

adopted such a practice, it would simply be giving an additional benefit to Australia Post, because the cash flow of that body and not that of the Water Board would be improved as a result.

The member for Victoria Park referred to the fact that the board placed advertisements in the paper prior to restricting the water supplies of people who had not paid their accounts. The board outlayed a certain sum on this sort of publicity and it proved to be successful. It is clear a number of people who had not paid their accounts took notice of the advertisements, because officers of the board observed that, after the Press releases, it received a greater number of payments than usual. As a result, the water supplies of fewer people were restricted.

I should like to point out in a little more detail why it would be impractical to legislate for a final notice to be sent to Water Board customers giving them seven days within which to pay their accounts. In round figures, the board's turnover this year will be \$120 million. The proposition I am about to put forward is a personal opinion only, but I maintain that if the board announced by sending out final notices that people had seven days within which to pay their water bills, and did not have to pay upon receiving the first notice, a number of people, especially businesses, would take advantage of the practice and thus the board's cash flow would be delayed considerably. How long the delay would be, could not be known exactly.

If only half the people who contribute to the \$120 million revenue of the Water Board actually made their payments at the correct time—members should not forget also that businesses might take advantage of this—it would mean there would be a delay in receiving the other \$60 million of the board's turnover, which would result in loss of interest at 1.25 per cent—that is a conservative figure—a loss of approximately \$750 000 to the board.

Mr Brian Burke: All you need do is advance by seven days the present timetable and you have solved that problem. Are you saying the SEC is going to stop sending out final notices?

Mr P. V. Jones: Yes, probably.

Mr Brian Burke: The Minister for Fuel and Energy has indicated the SEC will stop sending out final notices.

Mr MENSAROS: In addition to the \$750 000 to which I have just referred, the board would have to meet the cost of issuing final notices of this nature. Assuming for the purposes of the exercise that it is necessary for the MWB to send final notices twice a year to only one-third—not

half—of its customers, the cost involved would be approximately \$250 000. Based on those figures, it appears the cost of adopting the practice of issuing second final notices would amount to approximately \$1 million.

I emphasise that, bearing in mind today's high interest rates, it is essential we take into consideration the board's cash flow. It is interesting to note that when the statistics became available for the end of August, and bearing in mind second notices of payment were not sent out, one-fifth of residential ratepayers—that is, 60 400—had not paid the first moiety of their accounts and, in aggregate, \$11.25 million were outstanding. Although that figure applies for only one month, it will continue into following months at a reduced level.

Approximately half the total number of non-residential ratepayers—that is, approximately 19 000—had not paid the first moiety of their accounts which resulted in a figure of approximately \$6 million outstanding. Therefore, the anticipated revenue of the board from that particular source was reduced by a little less than one-third of the total of \$20 million.

It is clear that, if the board issued second notices stating that payment had to be made within seven days, the figures to which I have just referred would be considerably higher. Human and corporate nature being what it is, people need either an incentive to pay or a disincentive not to delay payment.

Mr Brian Burke: That is what a final notice is.

Mr MENSAROS: I do not agree with the Leader of the Opposition, because I have endeavoured to point out that the issuing of final notices will not result in a saving to the board, and indeed would result in an added cost of \$1 million which I maintain is a conservative figure bearing in mind that it is based on one month only. Therefore, this practice would increase the charges which would have to be met by other ratepayers.

Mr Brian Burke: With all your arithmetic so far you have admitted that it has been a matter of opinion and speculation on behalf of certain people.

Mr MENSAROS: The point is whether consumers pay their accounts.

Mr Brian Burke: I challenge you to allow an independent financial expert to cost the proposition that final notices be sent out.

Mr MENSAROS: I am very happy to do that if the member pays for it.

Mr Bryce: That is very smug.

Mr MENSAROS: Precisely what happens is that we advertise in advance that we intend to restrict the water supply of people who have not paid their accounts. The final step is that an officer of the board restricts the water supply.

The human treatment aspect has been considered differently by various members of the Opposition. The member for Melville said the board is courteous and obliging; and the member for Morley said that it is invariably impolite. No matter what people believe the board to be, it has never refused a consumer the ability to pay his account in instalments if he can show, even without any great detail, that he has difficulty paying the account at one time. The board has never refused any person the possibility to make part payments over a period—consumers have been allowed to organise their payments by instalments. This policy applies to everyone; to emotional cases of single parents as well as others.

As I have said, we advertise our intention through the media, and still people have the option to request that they be allowed to make part payments over a period. It is only the people who do not care less about paying their water rates who are on the receiving end of the curtailment or restriction of water supplies. People affected by a restriction sometimes have innocently overlooked the position of their account, or have not taken note of our advertisements. As soon as those people realise that their water has been restricted they come and pay their accounts, and their water supply is reconnected the next morning or some time during the next day.

I will refer to the situation in other States. It is interesting to note that none of them has legislative provisions to cover the collection of overdue water rates. There is no doubt that some States send out final notices; Victoria and New South Wales follow that system, but South Australia does not. South Australia proceeds to restrict water supply if payment is not received after the first notice. According to the statistics available to me all States bar Queensland either restrict or cut off water supplies, or both, if water rates are not paid by the appropriate time. Queensland is the only State which uses only legal action to recover outstanding accounts.

This aspect of the matter brings me to a question raised by the Opposition: Why do we not restrict ourselves to legal action? It is quite obvious that to take legal action we would be involved in tremendous expense. In addition, it is time-consuming, and the more time we have moneys outstanding, the lower our cash flow,

which means we forgo more interest. Just previously I explained that point.

With due respect to the member for Melville, although a system of taking legal action seems to be correct theoretically, practically it would not work. It is not practical to say that a ratepayer who should pay his rates but does not will be required to foot the Bill for litigation. Firstly, in practice that suggested system would never work; and, secondly, in practice we would never be able to recover the cost of litigation. The finances of the board would not be assisted; in fact, the contrary would occur—the finances of the board would be aggravated.

The question was raised that commercial, non-domestic ratepayers are not on the receiving end of the restriction of water supplies. The answer is simple. The vast majority of commercial users do not have a water meter installed at their premises. The system is being examined, but at present commercial users pay water rates at a level related to the gross rental valuation of their properties. Invariably the level of rates for commercial users is more than the level that would apply if the amount of water used was taken into consideration. In that case no meter is required.

The board virtually has no physical opportunity to restrict or cut off that water supply. In cases where the user is not in an individual but in a multi-tenanted building the water supply can be cut off only by the board cutting into bitumen, or whatever, to get to the device that would enable the board to restrict or cut off the water supply. In those cases no other physical opportunity is available to the board to cut off the water supply. Even doing so would affect the other tenants, who had paid. That is a reason for water restrictions not applying to commercial users. In addition, the board has more chance of achieving a satisfactory result through litigation against business people. Usually there is more chance of recovering the amount outstanding. In almost 100 per cent of cases when litigation is commenced, the action does not proceed in court because the consumer decides to pay up. That occurs in the majority of those cases. Again in the case of commercial users the board will make provision for part payments to be made, if this is found equitable.

I come now to an assertion made in various speeches. It has been stated that more than \$200 000 has been taken illegally. With the utmost respect for the legal profession, I must say that if someone seeking a legal opinion decides to shop around for long enough he will be able to get virtually any legal opinion he desires.

We must consider section 41 and take into consideration latest developments through Commonwealth legislation relating to jurisprudence. Recently the Commonwealth Income Tax Assessment Act was amended. If my memory serves me correctly, the Australian Labor Party did not object to that amendment. I do not intend to go into the merits or demerits of that legislation, but I indicate that it went a step towards telling the courts that when they interpret legislation they must take into account the intention of legislators. If we consider that point and refer to section 41 which states that the board may turn or cut off water in certain cases, we can be sure—I am quite certain of this—that there would be scarcely one court, let alone a higher court, that would not follow the intention of this Parliament that where possible in regard to the cutting off or restriction of water supplies the more humane system of restricting water supplies could be adopted. In addition, we would find scarcely one court that would say we cannot charge a ratepayer, who has not paid his water rate, for restricting his water supply and reinstating it when the account is paid.

I am positive the board did not act illegally. However, we decided to bring down this validating legislation so that we do not have employees, workers, or officers of the board who are loyal to the board subjected to Opposition initiated propaganda from ratepayers that the board is operating illegally.

I believe I have answered all the points raised by the Opposition. I will sum up briefly. Firstly, the aspect as to whether reminders are needed will be examined. If they are needed they will be implemented by administrative action, not by legislation which would be restrictive—times change.

Secondly, legislation is not required for the board to be able to recover moneys owing to it. These procedures are examined constantly. The humane aspect is very much taken into consideration.

Thirdly, I do not accept that the action taken by the board has been illegal. We reverted to proceeding with this legislation only to quell the storm in the teacup caused by the Opposition.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### *In Committee*

The Chairman of Committees (Mr Clarko) in the Chair; Mr Mensaros (Minister for Water Resources) in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1 put and passed.

Clause 2: Section 94 amended—

Mr BRIAN BURKE: The Opposition has signified its intention to move an amendment to clause 2 and that amendment standing in my name on the notice paper will be moved, but in a slightly amended form, to take into account the points raised by the member for Pilbara. The Minister in his reply to the second reading debate failed to advance any sound reason for the board's failure to provide for a final notice period. Let us look at the arguments that have been put forward in opposition to the proposition that there should be a final notice period.

The first argument the Minister put forward touched upon the financial management of the board and explained how delays in payment of accounts would mean that there would be an interruption to the cash flow and a substantial loss in terms of the interest to be earned on money paid by ratepayers. The Opposition says simply that all that needs to be done to overcome that problem is for the deadline to be advanced by one week so that the final notice goes out a week before a service would become liable to be restricted. That would mean that there would be no interruption whatsoever to the flow of money into the Metropolitan Water Board's coffers. Is the Minister not capable of grappling with that elementary consideration?

Mr O'Connor: Are you not then placing the additional burden on the good payers, those who pay up on time? Of course you are!

Mr BRIAN BURKE: There are no additional burdens placed on anybody in terms of revenue lost if the revenue is not lost. I am saying that the Minister says that if a final notice is given, we will have an interruption to the cash flow and a loss of the interest earned on moneys paid. That will not occur if the Metropolitan Water Board's timetable is simply advanced by one week so that the final notice goes out a week before the consumer would be liable to have his water service restricted. That is the first thing.

The second point I want to touch upon is the figure of \$1 million that the Minister has somehow plucked from the air. Today we see that he has plucked it from the air on the basis of his assessment of human nature. He has not been able to tell us any figures or facts that support the conjecture that it will cost \$1 million.

Mr Mensaros: Yes, I have. You have not understood it.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: He simply said that his estimation of human nature is that it would cost \$1 million because people would not pay until the

final notice was issued. Let me tell members that today we rang the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Water Board and he was unable to tell us the cost of putting out a final notice; so from where did the Minister get his \$1 million?

Mr Mensaros: I told you where I got my figure from. I told you it was a mathematical calculation which I was able to do without any help whatsoever. You can laugh about that, because you are incapable of doing so. If you had wanted to, you could have followed it.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: A piece of mental arithmetic that the Minister can do without any assistance whatsoever!

Mr Mensaros: That is right.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: As far as the people of this State, and certainly as far as the Opposition are concerned, before the Minister quantifies a cost, as he did last night, he needs to be able to show the basis on which the cost was comprised, the expenses of sending out letters, on the first hand, and the results of a survey done on the second hand, and also that there is some substantial basis for the wildly inaccurate nonsensical claim that the Minister made.

I repeat the challenge previously put to the Minister and ask him to reconsider his previous acceptance of that challenge. Is the Minister prepared to allow an independent financial expert access to the Metropolitan Water Board's records to ensure that the public have an accurate assessment of the cost of a final notice service? The Minister said he was prepared to do so provided the Opposition paid the cost. I repeat that challenge to the Minister and ask him to state his position.

Mr Mensaros: I will.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: Does he stand by what he previously said?

Mr Mensaros: I will. Don't worry.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: Does the Minister stand by what he said in answer to my interjection?

Mr Old: Do you want him to make a speech for you?

Mr BRIAN BURKE: The Minister previously made the offer and I want to know whether it stands, or whether he has had time to think about his position, because the Minister's clear statement recorded in *Hansard* is that he will allow an independent financial expert to make an assessment of the final notice proposition put forward by the Opposition.

The other thing I want to say to the Minister is that if he does maintain that he is prepared to do that, then it is a fairly insincere offer if he is not

prepared to say that the Metropolitan Water Board will bear the cost. What has the Minister got to hide? Where does he get his \$1 million from? What gives the Minister the right to such a pessimistic view of the character and nature of his fellow Western Australians? It is simply not good enough for the Minister to be able to say that a final notice should not be issued.

I want to draw the attention of the House to the interjection of the Minister for Fuel and Energy who said when the matter was raised during the Minister's second reading reply to the debate, that the SEC would be shortly cutting out final notices too. That is what the Minister said. Do people of this State realise that, not only can they not trust this Minister for Water Resources with his consideration of providing a final notice, with his calculation, but also the Minister for Fuel and Energy has said publicly that final notices will not be sent by the State Energy Commission? I would like to ask that Minister when the practice will cease, and whether the Premier and Treasurer is able to tell the House that this is a new policy to be implemented by all Government departments? Are final notices to be a thing of the past?

Mr Carr: He is very quiet.

Mr Bryce: Aren't they quiet?

Sir Charles Court: We are not going to answer questions of this amateur Perry Mason who uses these pregnant pauses to impress everybody. Unfortunately they cannot be written into *Hansard*.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Several Opposition members interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr Bryce: No comment!

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Ascot will be quiet.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: The Premier was missing for some of the debate and may not have heard his colleague, the Minister for Fuel and Energy, by way of interjection say that the State Energy Commission will cease sending out final notices.

Sir Charles Court: So what?

Mr Carr: So what!

Sir Charles Court: The Minister will tell you. He is a good Minister who is very frank with you people and expends more time and patience than I would in answering your silly questions.

Government members: Hear, hear!

Sir Charles Court: You are dealing with a very competent Minister.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr BRIAN BURKE: I am simply seeking quite rightly and properly from the Premier information as to whether it is a new policy to be adopted by this Government, that final notices shall not in the future be sent by Government departments. That is all I am asking the Premier.

Sir Charles Court: I am not going to be interrogated by you. If you want to ask a question of that kind, put it on the notice paper and you will get an answer; but the Minister will give you the answer on the State Energy Commission, and he will give it with my complete backing.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: The Premier will give the Minister his complete backing without knowing what the answer is! In any case, it should be stressed on the people of this State that the Minister for Water Resources has revealed today that he had no specific basis whatsoever on which to make his claim that it would cost more than \$1 million to send out final notices.

Mr Mensaros: That is utterly untrue.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: The public should know too—

Mr Mensaros: The public are more intelligent than you are. They can assume much better than you can.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: —that the office of the Leader of the Opposition contacted the Commissioner of the MWB and he was unable to say—

Sir Charles Court: You did not ask the appropriate question. I might add that if you are seeking to obtain the basis of the Minister's figure you are completely distorting the situation. The Minister might recite it all again to see if at the third time you can comprehend it.

Mr Pearce: Why does he not interject like you do? Why is the Minister not talking? You are taking over his Bill.

Sir Charles Court: I answered a question directed to me.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: The public should know that the commissioner was unable to tell us anything about the cost of sending out final notices. The public should know, too, that what must also be taken into account is the humane and compassionate circumstances of many of the people who have had their water supply restricted.

It is possible to ascertain from the Minister's figures that if all the residential customers of the MWB failed to pay their accounts prior to receipt of a final notice, it would cost the board more than \$3 for each final notice sent out. That is a scandal. If the board cannot operate more

efficiently it is high time an inquiry was conducted into the board's operations.

Mr Mensaros: Your figures cannot be comprehended.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: If every ratepayer—

Mr Mensaros: I never said "every ratepayer".

Mr BRIAN BURKE: I said "every ratepayer".

Mr Mensaros: That is your contention.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: It is all right for the Minister to make subjective assessments about the nature of Western Australians and how they cannot be relied upon to meet their obligations; it is all right for the Minister to twist the facts and say that a certain amount of money will not be available for investment when the Opposition so clearly and simply advances the timetable for payments; and if the Minister wishes to proceed to restrict water supplies he can do so; however, apparently it is not all right for members of the Opposition to do their arithmetic, on the figures supplied by him, to produce the cost for the number of final notices required if every ratepayer refuses to pay. That is the level of the operation of the MWB and if it proceeds along that line then it is long past the time for an inquiry into its operations.

Mr Mensaros: You still have not explained the \$3. I do not know from where you obtained the \$3.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: Taking into account the reservations expressed by the member for Pilbara and conceding that perhaps the very way in which final notices can be issued more effectively or cheaply by sending the sort of notice envisaged by the Opposition in its amendment, I move the following amendment—

Page 2, line 13—Delete the word "subsection" with a view to substituting the word "subsections".

If my amendment were successful, I would then move the following amendment—

Page 2, after line 25—Insert the following subsection—

(4) The Board shall give the occupier not less than seven days notice of its intention to turn or cut off or reduce the available rate of flow of the water supply to the land and, where this action is intended under paragraph (b) or (c) of subsection (1) of this section, the Board shall attach to the notice of final account, setting out the rates, moneys, rent or charges due and payable.

We are not saying that will involve the MWB in doing all those things the Minister says. However, if, as the member for Pilbara says, it is possible to call someone on the telephone that amendment will allow the telephone call to be made. If it is possible, as the member for Pilbara says, to send someone around in a vehicle to the 12 people each day who will be liable to have their water restricted, that amendment will allow that to happen. All it does is impress upon the Government the need for some final notice or warning to be issued.

Mr MENSAROS: Firstly, the comments made by members of the Opposition in support of their amendment ignore entirely one of the main points I made during the second reading stage. The Leader of the Opposition purported to answer my comment made during the second reading debate. My unanswered comments were that there are no provisions in any utilities legislation for final notices to be issued. I comment on this because the argument must have been too difficult for him to understand.

Secondly, as the Premier has suggested, I will reiterate the calculations which were not plucked from the air. They are fairly sound—

Mr Brian Burke: Fairly sound?

Mr MENSAROS: —and simple and other people have been able to understand them. If one knows that nothing will happen within seven days after the second account was sent out, I assume that half the moneys due to the board will not arrive in time.

Mr Brian Burke: What do you base your assumption on?

Mr MENSAROS: I base it on human and corporate nature. If this should happen, half the revenue of the board—\$60 million—will be received late. My calculation is conservative, if I only base it on a delay of one month, because after a second notice obviously not everybody would pay.

The delayed \$60 million would lose interest foregone for a month of \$750 000. Then I added the cost of sending out these notices twice a year, because we have two moieties. The cost would be nowhere near the vicinity of \$3 per person as the Leader of the Opposition said. There are over 360 000 domestic assessments a year and over 40 000 non-domestic assessments a year. The amount of \$3 per person would come to \$1.2 million for sending out one set of notices only.

Actually to send out second notices twice a year to one-third of the ratepayers would cost about a quarter of a million dollars. The cost of sending out two additional notices for the first and second

moiety each year and the forgone revenue in interest earned—and if members opposite can carry out this tremendously difficult exercise in arithmetic—will be \$750 000 and \$250 000 which makes a total of \$1 million. However, members opposite do not appear to understand.

In relation to the point raised regarding the issuing of notices in advance I would point out that this situation depends on how the rate is struck. There is no rule on what rate should be struck. It all depends on the amount of revenue that is required. If it is known that the deadline for the payment of accounts is to be postponed or brought forward the rate is struck accordingly. The present system is, the board at the beginning of the financial year assesses the funds that are required and it is calculated on the basis of allowing people about 30 days in which to pay their accounts. When making this calculation consideration is given to what accounts will be paid immediately and from past experience it is known roughly what accounts will not be paid. This cash flow is taken into consideration and the board is able to calculate the amount of interest it will receive on the payments that have been made.

As far as the Water Board is concerned it has two moieties per year and the greatest amount of money is received at the beginning of the financial year. If, as the Leader of the Opposition suggests, a deadline for payments of accounts is brought forward one still sends out a second notice—and the Opposition has an obsession about this second notice just for the sake of a second notice—the board strikes a little lower rate but the same money comes in.

The fourth point referred to the independent expert. Like the Premier, I will not let myself be cross-examined by the Opposition. This is the same old technique we are seeing again. The image of the Metropolitan Water Board is much improved in the public eye compared with what it was some years ago. The Government had some considerable influence in the board's achieving this efficiency. Even the member for Melville commented on the politeness of the board's employees. As the member for Melville said, he wanted to speak objectively. So this old red herring put forward by the Opposition of having the matter examined independently is simply a self-centred exercise. In the heat of the debate I said that if the Leader of the Opposition wants to pay for an expert, I would seek the co-operation of the board to explain to the expert what the Leader of the Opposition does not understand.

Mr BRYCE: The Minister has demonstrated to the Committee the real reason that he will not support the amendment proposed by the Leader

of the Opposition. He simply does not want a method that applies a seven-day final notice period. It is a question of attitude. We on this side of the Chamber have argued that it is a question of moral decency. It is not the least disturbing thing that could happen to a family in the middle of summer to have their water supply cut off or severely restricted. I can well imagine the reaction of the silver tails represented in this Chamber by the Minister himself—

Mr O'Connor: You have a few of them over there.

Mr BRYCE: —because they have not come across this problem themselves. I can well imagine the Minister finds it difficult to understand because he sits there and sniggers at the cases we have demonstrated about single mothers finding themselves in this predicament. That demonstrates that the Minister is out of touch and he is the same Minister who said by way of interjection a few moments ago that he and his colleagues understand the minds of the general public and that explains why he and his colleagues are in office!

Mr Chairman, I know you will permit me one small deviation to point out the truth. Since the Minister has been in office he and his colleagues have manipulated the Constitution, the Electoral Act and the Electoral Districts Act in a very crooked fashion—

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr BRYCE: —as a simple means—

#### *Withdrawal of Remarks*

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member will withdraw—

Mr BRYCE: —of preserving themselves in office.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the member to withdraw those words, "manipulated the Constitution, etc."

Mr BRYCE: "Manipulated the Constitution"—did I hear correctly?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Mr BRYCE: You are asking me to withdraw those words?

The CHAIRMAN: You used the words "manipulated the Constitution" and the word "crooked" which collectively are unparliamentary, and I ask you to withdraw.

Mr BRYCE: Each day a new page is being written for the guide book. I withdraw, in deference to you, Mr Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

#### *Committee Resumed*

Mr BRYCE: I see, while it was good enough for me to make that statement in this place a short while ago, it is not now. Let me just remind the Minister in the simplest and frankest of terms, the reason that he and his colleagues are in office at the present time, is because the Electoral Districts Act, the Electoral Act, and the Constitution have been tampered with and distorted by himself and his colleagues on no fewer than three occasions in regard to the Constitution, and twice in regard to the other Acts.

Mr Shalders: You should have been here last week!

Mr BRYCE: It is not because the Minister has any better understanding of what the general public think.

Several members interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr BRYCE: I come back to the amendment which is before the Chair.

Mr O'Connor: Jolly good.

Mr Shalders: That will be a change.

Mr BRYCE: The Minister has demonstrated that he does not think it is morally decent to give seven days' notice before cutting off or restricting substantially the water supply to the members of this community.

Mr O'Connor: You are trying to impose a penalty on the other 200 000.

Mr BRYCE: Not at all.

Mr O'Connor: You are.

Sir Charles Court: You will accept the higher cost?

Mr BRYCE: The theory of the higher cost is absurd.

Sir Charles Court: Let it be recorded that you will accept the higher cost.

Mr BRYCE: Let me just demonstrate this nonsense about the higher cost.

Mr O'Connor: There is a higher cost.

Mr BRYCE: Is it not astonishing—

Mr Pearce: You are going around cutting water off and then members of Parliament spend hundreds of dollars getting it put back on.

Mr Brian Burke: It costs more to reconnect and restrict than you get back from the people. It costs more than \$25.

Mr Pearce: You are making a loss every time you do it.

Mr O'Connor: The Water Board does not pay the total cost, and you know it.

Mr BRYCE: But the total cost has to be paid, whether or not it is met by the MWB. Let us consider the precise total cost involved, and let us consider some of the Minister's arguments used in defence of this fairly awkward position he occupies. He had the hide to suggest to members of this place that people would resist the initial invitation to pay their water accounts because at today's cost of money, they could earn up to 1¼ or 1½ per cent per month. This statement came from a man who says he understands the community, and the nature of the thinking of the public mind. This Minister says that people will sit on their money—they will invest it in other places.

Mr Pearce: Most of them have no money to invest.

Mr BRYCE: This illustrates how far removed from real life the Minister is on his "fat cat" salary. He does not understand that the bulk of the customers of the MWB have never dreamt of going anywhere near a short-term money market or an investment agency to invest their spare thousands of dollars. This is basically because they do not have any spare thousands of dollars. This Minister does not seem to appreciate that many thousands of people in the metropolitan community do not have any dollars to spare.

Mr Mensaros: That has nothing to do with my calculation.

Mr Brian Burke: Last night you said they would invest on the short-term money market.

Mr BRYCE: Last night, in the Minister's much complained about limit of six minutes he said that people would be playing the short-term money market instead of paying their bills. Let us put the Minister on the rack for a minute and find out something about his assessment of human nature. How many people in the metropolitan area does the Minister think would play the short-term money market?

Mr Mensaros: I was referring to corporate bodies.

Mr Brian Burke: But you did not restrict it to corporate bodies. If you take them to court, it will take longer.

Mr BRYCE: This is another aspect of the Minister's extremely weak position. He has been quite happy to explain to members that the board has two different sets of rules and regulations, one for the corporate or business sector of the community, which has the wherewithal to play the short-term money market, and another for the

remainder of the community, which constitutes individual families. He has failed to explain to the House, despite the fact he gave us an undertaking to do so—

Sir Charles Court: The Minister gave a very lucid explanation. Incidentally, I am interested that you are now putting yourself in the "fat cat" class.

Mr BRYCE: Now that the Premier has projected himself into the debate, perhaps he could explain why his Government adopts a policy of cutting off or restricting the supply of water to domestic householders when no such action is taken in respect of the business community.

Sir Charles Court: The Minister explained the position lucidly, simply, and fairly; if you stopped to think for one minute, you would go along with his argument.

Mr BRYCE: His explanation was so lucid and simple that the Premier himself cannot recall what the Minister said.

Sir Charles Court: I remember very well; in fact, I gave the Minister 10 out of 10 for his explanation.

Mr BRYCE: The Premier cannot explain the position.

Sir Charles Court: I do not have to.

Mr BRYCE: Of course the Premier does not have to; he knows he cannot, because the Minister did not bother to explain the matter to the Committee.

Sir Charles Court: I am very glad you consider yourself one of the "fat cats". I assume you are putting yourself in the same class as the Minister.

Mr BRYCE: I am a long way from it. Has the Premier looked at salary scales lately?

Sir Charles Court: I remind you that Government Ministers have forgone their increases.

Mr BRYCE: Let us examine some of the fallacious reasoning behind the Minister's argument in respect of the \$1 million. The Minister said it would cost \$250 000 to send reminder notices to a number of ratepayers.

Mr Mensaros: To one-third of ratepayers.

Mr BRYCE: The Minister has plucked the figure of one-third out of the air.

Mr Brian Burke: That is his assessment of human nature.

Mr BRYCE: That is right; this is the same man who claimed a lot of people would be investing in the short-term money market, instead of paying their water rates. The Minister has not come to this place and said, "Based on the experience of

Telecom or the State Housing Commission, we have decided to do it in this way". He has provided not one skerrick of evidence; he has simply plucked a figure of one-third out of the air and told us that it would cost \$250 000 to send reminder notices to those people.

Mr Brian Burke: He admits he has not spoken to the commissioner about it.

Mr BRYCE: No, because the commissioner would not say "boo" about any estimated cost. However, if we are generous and agree that it would cost \$250 000, the argument in relation to the remaining \$750 000 is fallacious, and the Minister knows it.

The Minister knows he can advance by seven days the delivery of that final notice. I ask the Minister to examine the logic of that position.

Mr Mensaros: I have already explained it.

Mr BRYCE: The Minister has not explained it. The Minister assumes the Opposition wants to give people additional time to pay. Let me explain the position to the Minister in the simplest and most straightforward of terms: If a water rate were due for payment by 1 August, and if the ratepayer were given 30 days' notice of the due date for payment, why cannot a reminder notice be sent to the ratepayer seven days before 1 August? In this way, it would not interfere with the board's cash flow position. The Minister has no answer.

Mr Mensaros: I have already answered it.

Mr BRYCE: The Minister knows that the \$750 000 component of his \$1 million is sheer hogwash. It was his attempt to put up an explanation—flimsy though it was—in regard to a figure he plucked out of the air last night and which he hoped would be promoted into a headline today. He knows there is not a skerrick of justification for that position.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: I do not think it can be emphasised too strongly that the Opposition's proposition completely negates the \$750 000 argument which the Minister says is the major component of the Government's stance on this issue. As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition pointed out, if the deadline for payment of water rates is 1 August, the final notice could be sent to ratepayers, on, say, 20 July. How can the Minister justify his statement that reminder notices will cause an interruption to the cash flow to the board in such a situation? How can he say a final notice sent under those sorts of conditions involves the board in providing the consumer with additional time to pay? It does not.

Mr Mensaros: You can do it any way you like. You can do it in advance. You still do not need a second notice. We could advance it to any date. If we send out a second notice, we are simply incurring a cost, and we push the date for final payment forward from the original time.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: Perhaps I am missing something in the Minister's argument; I will attempt to follow it as closely as possible. I repeat: If a final notice is sent at least a week before the specified deadline for payment of 1 August, after which date the ratepayer will become subject to the restriction of the service provided by the board, how will that interfere with the income flow of the board? The original deadline for payment would remain the deadline.

Mr Mensaros: It is only theory. You cannot advance it further. The board sets a deadline, which is the only practicable way of handling the matter. You have to bring down by-laws and to assess the needs of the board in each financial year, and to send out rate notices at the earliest practicable point of time.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: What period of time presently is allowed for the payment of water rates?

Mr Mensaros: About one month to six weeks, based on past experience.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: If a ratepayer is allowed six weeks to pay, what cost would be involved in sending him a final notice after four weeks had elapsed?

Mr Mensaros: It would depend on how many people the board thinks would not pay on time, because it is to those people that final notices would be sent. When I mentioned the figure of \$250 000, I was referring to two reminder notices being sent because water rates may be paid in two moieties. It would cost about \$125 000 to send reminder notices to one-third of the board's customers.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: How much money would be lost by the board in the situation I have outlined, where a ratepayer is given six weeks to pay his water rates and, two weeks before the six weeks are due to elapse, he is sent a final notice?

Mr Mensaros: You cannot calculate on a period of two weeks. I calculated a period of one month because we cannot advance the date on which the service will be disconnected or any other measure taken regarding delinquent ratepayers. You can argue objectively, or with slogans. If you care to argue objectively—unlike the Deputy Leader of the Opposition—you will accept that people do play the short-term money market. I accept that individual householders as a rule do not play the

money market. However, a large proportion of the board's income comes from the business sector of the community, which has the capacity to invest its money on the short-term money market. That is what I meant when I said that people would play the money market. I am not a fool.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: I accept what the Minister now puts forward; but if he is presently allowing a six-week period for payment, the only legitimate cost involved in inserting a final notice half-way through the six-week period or two-thirds of the way through that period is the cost of sending the notice. At the end of the period that the Government is already allowing following the sending of the final notice, it would still be competent for the board to restrict the water supply. The board would not be constrained from restricting the supplies for any longer than it would under the present circumstances.

Mr Mensaros: That is only theory.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: That is fact.

Mr Mensaros: If I was wrong about the \$750 000, and by some miraculous method you could prove that it was \$650 000, I still would not instruct the board to do this because there are better methods—advertising and such like before the water would be disconnected. That is a much easier method.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: It is a significant concession for the Minister to say that he is prepared to reconsider the \$750 000, which is the major component of the cost about which he spoke.

If the Minister's assessment of human nature is correct, the same proportion of people will leave the payment of their accounts, in the absence of a final notice, until they absolutely have to pay the bill. We say simply that if, two weeks before the elapse of that period, a final notice is issued, the only cost about which the Government can speak legitimately is the cost of sending the final notice.

I am pleased that the Minister has conceded that the \$750 000 might not have been accurate. I suspect that under the system we propose, the \$750 000 would not exist.

Mr Mensaros: That is nonsense. I did not say that. I said I made a calculation. If you calculated it differently and we still lost a lot of money, I would not recommend it.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: The Minister's calculation was based on a presumption of the final notice period as an extra period at the end of the period allowed already. That is the Minister's presumption, but it is not the intention of the

Opposition. We are talking about a final notice within the period the Minister already allows.

The Minister said previously that he had not contacted the board to discuss this matter, because he did not need to. He said that he was capable—

Mr Mensaros: I did not say that. I said I did not talk to the commissioner. Do not twist my words.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: The Minister said he was capable of making the calculation that I was not capable of making.

Mr Mensaros: That is right.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: I am prepared to concede the giant intellect of the Minister; but I want to know how he was able to calculate the cost of sending out the notice if he did not contact the commissioner about the matter.

Mr Mensaros: Not the commissioner, but through the director of finance. I have it here in writing. You asked whether I had rung the commissioner. I said I did not speak to him.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: The situation has resolved itself, and the Minister is confronted with a proposition that a final notice in the form proposed by this amendment is efficient and inexpensive, and it should be issued prior to the restriction of the water supplies.

We are not saying that the Minister should involve himself with expensive letters to everybody. He might like to take the advice of the member for Pilbara and provide the final notice that he suggested. That was a cheaper way of doing it.

We have to grapple with the Minister's contention that no other authority is required under this legislation. There is very good reason that this should be included as an amendment to this Act, because the Water Board cannot be trusted to ensure that the people receive a final notice.

The Minister said that the board has been considering the matter for three years. He did not tell the Committee that it was only after we approached the Water Board that it agreed to restrict services rather than cut them off. It was only after we drew to the attention of the Minister—

Mr Mensaros: You did not say it was illegal, did you?

Mr BRIAN BURKE: I am coming to that point. It was only after the Minister accepted our advice that he ascertained the position himself. We told the Minister he would need legal authority to do what he was doing. It is like

dragging an unwilling horse to water. One cannot make him drink.

In one way or another, the Opposition will not rest until the Metropolitan Water Board has felt a breath of fresh spring air through its musty corridors. It is almost too much to talk about the sorts of things in which the MWB has been involved. We will continue to press the Government until an impartial and thorough inquiry has been held, to clear the cobwebs.

Mr PEARCE: I have been sitting here with a degree of incredulity, with my mind boggling at the thought of hundreds of thousands of Western Australians going out and investing between \$60 and \$100 each on the short-term money market. If that was a feasible proposition, it would probably create a great deal of employment for the State; so I am surprised that the Minister and his colleagues have not latched onto that as a job-creation scheme.

The Minister suggests that massive costs would be involved in sending out final notices; and he can calculate this cost by some mystical financial magic that appears to be his prerogative alone and does not relate to the officers of the Water Board. He overlooks the costs that are incurred in the present process.

At the moment, a person who does not pay has his water supply restricted. Literally, there are gangs of men from the Water Board whose job it is to drive around in Water Board trucks, at a great cost of fuel and so forth, to disconnect or restrict the services of people who do not pay. If a person has his water restricted in this way in my electorate, normally he goes to his member of Parliament. I have been asked on many occasions to refer the matter to the Water Board; and I have found that the board now employs a person full-time to deal with complaints by members of Parliament. That officer then has other Water Board employees find out the circumstances, and each case is gone into to determine when the person's water will be put back on. On the worst possible case for the individual, or the best possible case for the department, a fee will be charged for reconnecting the service. However, the fee would cover only a fraction of the cost incurred in restricting the supply. It would not cover the time taken by the member of Parliament. The cost of that alone would run to hundreds of dollars for each particular case.

Under our proposal, we are considering the cost of a 24c stamp, a piece of paper organised by a computer, and an envelope. There has to be a person to match the paper from the computer, the stamp, and the envelope.

Mr Brian Burke: And there is no loss of interest in such a final notice because it is within the period already allowed for payment.

Mr PEARCE: That is exactly the point. The only cost is the cost of the mailing of the final notices to people who do not pay. As my leader points out, we are already looking at that type of charge.

Taking that assumption for granted, we have to balance the cost of sending the final notice against the cost of not sending it and thus restricting the supply of a much larger number of people than would otherwise be the case if the final notice were sent out.

So far as I know, the Water Board is the only authority or company which adopts the practice of sending one notice, and then instituting the ultimate sanction if payment is not made on that notice. As the member for Dianella pointed out last night, the State Energy Commission does not work on that basis. It sends out final notices.

As the member for Vasse discovered to his cost yesterday, Telecom sends out final notices. Everyone does but the MWB. Why is it that all the other groups can afford to send out final notices? Why are their economics not crippled by sending out final notices? It is only the Water Board whose economics are so precarious it would fall into rack and ruin financially if it sent out final notices.

Clearly the economics of the situation are not as the Minister says they are. Perhaps he can tell us why his attitude was different when he had responsibility for the SEC and not the Water Board, when his mind was more concerned about bolts rather than snails. Why was it then that final notices were mailed out yet that is not the case with the Water Board?

As the Leader of the Opposition has demonstrated, the Minister came in here without having given thought to final notices. The first he heard of them as a serious suggestion was when they were raised by the Opposition. The Minister has not had the decency to check with officers of the Water Board to see about the feasibility of sending out final notices. There has been no costing of the cost benefit.

Mr Mensaros: Why do you say that which you know is untrue, as you usually do? I said I did not check with the commissioners.

#### *Point of Order*

Mr PEARCE: Mr Chairman, I have been doing my bit to precipitate the decorous use of language in this Chamber. I would think the words "Why do you say that which you know is

untrue, as you usually do" are a clear slur against me and I seek their withdrawal.

Mr MENSAROS: I am very happy to withdraw without your ruling, Mr Chairman.

### *Committee Resumed*

Mr Mensaros: But what you said is still untrue.

Mr PEARCE: That the Minister has done a proper costing?

Mr Mensaros: No, that I did not talk to the officers of the board. I explained the situation to the Leader of the Opposition. I did not talk to the commissioners. I also have a written report from the officers of the board. You are exaggerating something that is based on fact, but you have deliberately distorted it.

Mr PEARCE: The Minister said he had some contact with the director of finance.

Mr Mensaros: Why did you say what you said?

Mr PEARCE: The problem is that the Minister is not listening. If he had settled down for a second, instead of foaming at the mouth and popping at the eyes, and listened to the complete sentence, he would have understood there was no discrepancy in what we were both saying. The Minister did not contact the officers of the board to ensure there was a proper costing done on the cost of sending out final notices and comparing that with the cost to the board of restricting water supplies for a large number of people who do not pay their bills on time.

Mr Mensaros: This is precisely what they have advised me.

Mr PEARCE: The Minister has not had a proper costing of the discrepancies.

Mr O'Connor: Have you?

Mr PEARCE: Of course I have not; I have said several times that I do not have that information. The only way I could get it, as the Deputy Premier would know, would be to ask a question of the Minister in this House, and the chance of getting a proper answer would be pretty slim given the attitude he has adopted here.

It is a calculation the Minister ought to make. If the Deputy Premier is interested in the debate he would realise the other point I have made is that every other authority or commercial enterprise has to do the same calculation for itself and they all come down in favour of final notices. The Minister's reckoning in regard to this is wrong. I would be convinced of the rightness of his case if he got his departmental officers to compare the costs of one system with those of the other. The fact that he has not done so leads me to believe he has not had the figures prepared or,

if he has, they do not support his case. That would be the only reason the Minister would have figures prepared and not use them in Parliament—because they did not support his argument. I believe the Minister has not had those figures prepared and that is why we have not seen them.

When the Leader of the Opposition made this good suggestion—which the member for Pilbara and probably other back-benchers seem to think is a good idea—the Minister, because he had not thought of it and because the idea was not contained in his legislation, decided the people of Western Australia were to have their water supply restricted, often by mistake, at great personal inconvenience to themselves or at great risk to their health so that the Minister could walk about dignifiedly through his Floreat electorate. I do not think his dignity is worth that.

Mr BRYCE: The last hour of debate has crystallised the position that produces a considerable amount of embarrassment for the Minister. He owes this Committee an apology; he owes the public an apology; and he owes the representatives of the media who report the proceedings of this place an apology for having plucked, wilfully and knowingly, a figure of \$1 million out of the air to distort the true position with regard to those reminders. The last one hour of examination of this question has demonstrated, without any doubt, that the Minister's figure was a monumental exaggeration of the truth.

What the Minister has said to this Committee in the last few minutes is that he contacted his department and some of his officers advised him that the Opposition's suggestion would cost approximately \$125 000 twice a year.

Mr Mensaros: No, once a year. Twice a year would be \$250 000.

Mr BRYCE: That is exactly what I said. That was the advice the Minister got from his department about the cost of sending out final notices.

Sir Charles Court: That is not the financial cost to the board.

Mr BRYCE: But the very point we are making is that it is.

Sir Charles Court: Are you going to advocate now—and I will give you full marks for it if you do—that the community should accept this extra cost of giving the second notices?

Mr BRYCE: The Premier has not listened. If he is talking about the \$125 000—

Sir Charles Court: No, we are talking about the true cost to the community. Are you going to accept the higher cost?

Mr BRYCE: The \$250 000 is a figure plucked out of this Minister's imagination.

Sir Charles Court: It is a very realistic figure.

Mr BRYCE: If this Minister is concerned about the loss of interest, the loss of investment moneys, or his income flow, or whatever it is he is concerned about with that deadline, we have simply and logically suggested to him that instead of assuming we meant an additional seven days' notice he now accepts the reality of exactly what we said, which was that, prior to the deadline which his office currently sets, seven days' notice should be given before that point is reached. If that happens it would enable all the board's customers, be they householders or business proprietors, to receive seven days' notice without the board losing one cent from its investment.

Sir Charles Court: You disappoint me. I gave you the credit for having a few brains, but I will have to take that back now.

Mr BRYCE: This is the essence of the question before the Chair. We have tried to explain what the situation is to the Minister on so many occasions that we have probably reached the point of no return. It is not a cost of \$1 million a year, based on his fallacious reasoning, that should be considered. If we consider his extravagances, the figure may reach as high as \$250 000 a year, assuming that 100 000 customers would take this unfair advantage of the Minister as he suspects they might.

*Sitting suspended from 12.45 to 2.15 p.m.*

Mr BRYCE: Prior to the luncheon suspension I had suggested to the Minister it was appropriate he should apologise to this Committee and to the public generally for his wild assertion, based on distorted and exaggerated premises, that it would cost \$1 million a year for the MWB to send out final notices to delinquent customers.

Mr Mensaros: I apologise to the public for having such a weak and stupid Opposition. I do indeed.

Mr BRYCE: That was a rather unkind cut on the part of the Minister.

Sir Charles Court: Not after what you have been saying.

Mr BRYCE: I might say the Minister has set me back on my heels reeling as a result of that interjection!

Mr Shalders: Cut to the quick!

Mr BRYCE: I shall not pursue that, because although the Minister has refused to make his apology, normally he is regarded as being an honourable person, and we will be a little surprised if he does not take the opportunity that remains to him during the Committee stage to make that apology, because the course the debate has taken during the last hour or so has demonstrated beyond question that the cost to the Water Board, if it adopted the practice of issuing final notices, would be closer to the figure of \$250 000 than \$1 million a year.

I should like to emphasise one other aspect of this question which concerns us. It has been touched on already by the Leader of the Opposition and I refer to the question raised by the Minister when he drew a distinction between an administrative decision and a legislative decision in relation to the practice of sending out final notices. The Minister has suggested to the Committee the MWB would be the only semi-Government authority or governmental agency which was required by Statute—required by law—to send out a final notice.

The Minister suggested to the Committee that if such a final notice system were to be developed, it would be perfectly reasonable for it to be left to the administrative processes of the board. I want to re-emphasise the view expressed by the Leader of the Opposition. In normal circumstances it would be quite reasonable to expect the board to adopt this sort of practice purely on an administrative basis. Indeed, the board could have done so at any stage during the last 30, 40, or 50 years, if it had desired to do so. More particularly, since this Minister has been responsible for the affairs of this board, it could have introduced the system at any time during the last year or so; but this Minister reflects a particular approach to the clients of the board. He has indicated directly and indirectly during the course of debate that he does not accept the moral decency that is involved in forwarding a final notice to people before their water supplies are reduced substantially or cut off finally.

Therefore, we can only assume that, since this is the basis of the attitude of the board, demonstrated by the Minister here and by the board in its contact with the general public, it is necessary to write the provision into a Statute. That is precisely the reason the Leader of the Opposition moved an amendment which would make a special case of the Water Board, because the board and the Minister responsible for it have demonstrated they are not prepared to accede to what constitutes a very reasonable and decent request.

By this stage of the debate it has become quite apparent it is necessary to write into the Statute, and thereby make a special example of the Water Board, a requirement that the board give to people a final notice that they have seven days within which to pay their water bills.

The final point I make is this: We are firmly of the view that business premises and household premises should be treated in exactly the same manner and through you, Sir, I repeat my request to the Minister—in fact I offer him a challenge—to take the opportunity that remains to him in the course of this debate to provide us with the justification—

Mr Mensaros: I already did that when I replied to the second reading debate.

Mr BRYCE: —as to why the board treats business premises differently from the way in which it treats domestic households.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: It is quite clear the Minister is not going to bother to reply to the points which have been raised by the Opposition.

Mr Mensaros: I have done so already. I do not intend to do so a second time.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: The Minister's argument has been shown to be unintelligent, empty, wrong, and misleading. As far as the Opposition is concerned, it has demonstrated clearly the Minister's assessment of the cost of providing a final notice service was at least \$750 000 astray. The Minister has refused repeatedly to acknowledge that he made that mistake because he falsely assumed—wrongly presumed—that the Opposition was talking about an extra seven-day period apart from that which the MWB provides already to its customers.

In that situation—that is, a situation in which no extra time is provided—there can be no substance to the argument that income from interest earned on money paid will be forgone. It is as simple as that.

The Minister's refusal to grapple with that point is understandable, because I have searched my mind and there is no apparent answer to that shortcoming in the Minister's argument.

As far as the difference in treatment between industrial and commercial users and domestic users is concerned, it is not true to say the Minister has answered satisfactorily the query re-emphasised by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. The fleeting reference the Minister made to that aspect encompassed only his belief it would require digging up bitumen in some cases in order to insert a disc that restricted the water supply to a particular industrial consumer.

We on this side of the Committee have consistently raised the question as to why the MWB has refused to meter the water used by industrial consumers. If the MWB were able to explain satisfactorily that omission, some credence might be lent to the Minister's arguments about the difficulty of inserting restricting discs in the pipes which serve industrial and commercial users. The Minister has failed also to meet that challenge.

If we recap on the stages through which we have passed in this debate and the identifiable disclosures made by the Minister, we can see, firstly, that the Minister, for no good reason, because of the fallacy of his costing argument, refuses to provide a final notice.

In respect of that part of his costing which referred to interest forgone on moneys received, the Minister's argument does not hold water. The question of \$250 000 being the cost of twice reminding people that payment for their water rates is due—on a final notice basis—is by the Minister's own admission a result of his subjective assessment of the minds of his fellow Western Australians.

I remind everybody also that it was only last night the Minister said that if we allow residential consumers the opportunity of a final notice they would delay paying their water rates until they received that final notice in order to use the money saved to play the short-term money market. That is nonsense.

The Minister constantly tells us that we should give him examples of people who have been dissatisfied after they have made requests to the Water Board for leniency in the payment of their accounts. Let us now ask the Minister: How many families does he know of who use money they might save from the late payment of water accounts to play the short-term money market?

Mr Mensaros: I haven't said that, and you know it.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: The Minister said that people would play the short-term money market; that is exactly what he said last night. No matter how he tries to wriggle now, he said that. We heard him say that. Although he does not like now to admit the stupidity inherent in his accusing average Western Australian families of being delinquent in paying their bills, and deliberately delinquent to enable them to play the short-term money market, we know we heard the Minister make that remark.

Mr Mensaros: You said the people from Balcatta play the short-term money market.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: I said the people from Balga play the short-term money market with the \$1.50 they save by not paying their water rates in the stipulated 30-day period. To regard such a statement as fact is arrant nonsense.

Mr O'Connor: You are covering up now. You say you didn't say that.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: The other point which shows the Minister is so clearly hoist with his own petard is his contention that people who do play the short-term money market are the ones prevented from doing so by the practice of water supplies being restricted. As well as anyone in this Chamber he knows that the people most able to play the short-term money market—I doubt whether many of them do—are the industrial and commercial consumers of water. They are the ones to whom the Minister does not restrict the supply of water.

Mr Mensaros: We don't send second notices to them.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: Of course the board does not send second notices to them, but in cases of delinquency in the payment of their rates the board takes them to court. It wastes time and money pursuing them, but it does not treat families with children, and separated parents with children, in the same way. That is a measure of the Minister's humanity.

Mr Mensaros: You are just repeating yourself. I will not respond to you. You want a reply, but I won't reply. If you are going to talk to the audience, explain that I won't reply because everything you have said is repetition, but in a more malicious and personally attacking way. You don't deserve a word of reply.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: I would be pleased to add up the minutes used by the Minister's interjections. I am sure they would amount to a longer period than the period taken up had he chosen to reply.

Mr Mensaros: You go on repeating yourself on this floor for minutes and minutes. It is typical of the new Opposition, the new image. It is typical.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: I will continue to ask the Minister—

Mr Mensaros: The new image!

Mr Bryce: He is berserk.

Mr Old: You are the one who said the "present" Leader of the Opposition.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: It pains me not one whit to see the Minister cavort in this fashion.

Mr Mensaros: They are good words. Do you have any more such words in your vocabulary?

Do you have any more words? That is your only strength. It is not a real strength.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: I feel sorry for the Minister, not only because of the way in which he is carrying on now, which is not normal, but also because he attempts to deny me the right to put to him continuously—*ad nauseam* if that is how he finds it—the proposition that his costings are wrong and that he has failed to grapple with the shortcomings of the Water Board. He has failed to come to grips with his lack of humanity by way of his refusal to give Western Australian families final notice of the possibility of their having their water supplies restricted. If he wants to become upset and rant and rave at me because I am saying these things, then he had better be prepared to rant and rave and become upset during the next 18 months. So long as he shies away from the honesty inherent in the proposition that he should answer for that which he is responsible for bringing about, he will want to rant and rave and become upset.

The Opposition says without any blemish on its conscience that when we are in Government Western Australians will receive final notices. The provision of final notices to families with young children, families who cannot afford to be without water supplies or have them restricted, is a matter of elementary compassion, justice, and humanity.

The Minister has been hoist with his own petard by his failure to explain why his costings are wrong, and by his inability as a man by presuming the nature of his fellow Western Australians when he says that they will play the short-term money market rather than pay their bills. I make it perfectly plain on behalf of the Opposition that we have great faith in the character of the average Western Australian, and we have a great belief in his ability and intention to fulfil his obligations. The Minister does not have that faith. He has shown nothing but an insulting disregard, firstly, for the average Western Australian's character, and, secondly, for his ability to meet his obligations.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result—

Ayes 18

Mr Barnett	Mr Grill
Mr Bertram	Mr Hodge
Mr Bridge	Mr McIver
Mr Bryce	Mr Pearce
Mr Brian Burke	Mr Skidmore
Mr Terry Burke	Mr A. D. Taylor
Mr Carr	Mr Tonkin
Mr Cowan	Mr Wilson
Mr Davies	Mr Bateman

(Teller)

## Noes 23

Mr Blaikie  
Mr Clarko  
Sir Charles Court  
Mrs Craig  
Dr Dadour  
Mr Grayden  
Mr Hassell  
Mr Herzfeld  
Mr P. V. Jones  
Mr MacKinnon  
Mr McPharlin  
Mr Mensaros

Mr Nanovich  
Mr O'Connor  
Mr Old  
Mr Rushton  
Mr Sibson  
Mr Sodeman  
Mr Spriggs  
Mr Trethowan  
Mr Tubby  
Mr Williams  
Mr Shalders

(Teller)

## Pairs

Ayes  
Mr Jamieson  
Mr Parker  
Mr I. F. Taylor  
Mr Harman  
Mr T. H. Jones

Noes  
Mr Young  
Mr Coyne  
Mr Laurance  
Mr Crane  
Mr Grewar

Amendment thus negated.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3 put and passed.

Title put and passed.

## Report

Bill reported, without amendment, and the report adopted.

## As to Third Reading

Leave denied to proceed forthwith to the third reading.

## TRANSPORT AMENDMENT BILL (No. 3)

## Second Reading

Debate resumed from 24 September.

**MR McIVER** (Avon) [2.38 p.m.]: The Bill before us is necessary to allow the transfer of the control of the operation of taxis in country areas from the Road Traffic Authority to the Transport Commission. I believe firmly that this is a good piece of legislation. It has its advantages. We indicate to the Minister that the Opposition is not opposed to the Bill.

We have seen the decline of the taxi industry over a number of years. Taxi operators in country areas such as my own electorate, have certainly had financial problems. The industry has declined since the war years.

The other provision in the Bill, of course, will allow the Transport Commission to transfer licences of taxi operators in country areas with the permission of the local authority. It also will allow local authorities, if they so desire, to relinquish their responsibilities in regard to taxi licences and administration. I have always been of the firm opinion with all facets of transport that it is better to keep the transport industry under the

control of one department. That is the reason I feel the legislation will benefit the industry.

I have only one criticism of the Bill. I hope that the commission, when it issues licences to anyone entering the taxi industry in country areas, serves the people. Nobody would deny taxi operators a fair income, but taxi operators must meet the requirements of the people, even if it is in the early hours of the morning.

Mr Tonkin: Hear, hear!

**Mr McIVER**: I am a little concerned to hear reports that during the recent visit of sailors of the United States Navy, some taxi operators ignored the general public. No doubt, some taxi operators concentrated on the US sailors who were on R and R leave, whose wallets are usually full, and who are known to be good tippers.

I was rather disturbed to read a letter in *The West Australian* recently and to receive reports and telephone calls indicating that when US sailors are in town, taxi operators are not concerned for the public.

I remember in my own electorate during the height of the war years, thousands of troops went through the Northam camp and that type of situation arose from time to time. I firmly believe that when new operators in the industry are given permission to operate taxis, this matter should be stressed to them.

The other advantage of the proclamation of this Bill will be that the Road Traffic Authority will be relieved of its administrative duties, and this will allow it to have a freer hand.

Mr Cowan: We might be relieved of the RTA shortly.

Mr McIVER: We will have to amend the Act further then. The rumours going around the place—

Mr Bateman: The taxi drivers will have a ball with the grand final of the football, the American ships coming in, and the Royal Show!

Mr McIVER: The Minister may run a suburban service to Subiaco. I say that in all sincerity, because the taxi industry, from its introduction until the time it was taken over by the Taxi Control Board—which I feel was a big advantage because it put everyone on the same plane—allowed taxi owners to have redress. Of course, that redress will now be extended to the country areas; under the administration of the Commissioner of Transport and the authority that he delegates.

With those remarks, I indicate to the Minister that the Opposition is not opposed to the legislation before us.

**MR RUSHTON** (Dale—Minister for Transport) [2.43 p.m.]: I convey to the member for Avon and to the Opposition my appreciation for their support of this legislation. I will just touch on one or two points raised by the member for Avon.

Firstly, I refer to service to the public which is an important matter in this industry. Recently we released 14 new taxi licences. Of course, the taxi industry responded by saying that it was not very happy about that situation. We had been receiving complaints relating to service to the public. I have made the point loudly and clearly to the industry that it has the obligation to service the public in an efficient way and that it needs to demonstrate to the commissioner and to myself that the public are being serviced satisfactorily. If it is not, our redress is to issue more plates. This is something that one does not do frequently because we want to have the most viable industry possible.

I have full regard for the great service that the majority of taxi drivers give. The point raised by the member for Avon was that, in issuing licences we should and must have full regard for those people who are being issued the licences. They are expected to respond to the public need. I can assure the member that this is obviously one of the first responsibilities of the commissioner. The commissioner must select as taxi operators people with the qualities that will ensure they give good service to the public they serve.

I thank the member for Avon and the Opposition for their support. 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 Rushton (Minister for Transport), and transmitted to the Council.

## **ROAD TRAFFIC AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)**

*Second Reading*

Debate resumed from 24 September.

**MR McIVER** (Avon) [2.47 p.m.]: As we have dealt with the previous measure and this is only

complementary legislation which is necessary to amend the Road Traffic Act, there is no need for discussion on this legislation. In order to expedite the business of the House, I indicate that I support the legislation.

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 Rushton (Minister for Transport), and transmitted to the Council.

## **MISUSE OF DRUGS BILL**

*Council's Amendments*

Amendments made by the Council now considered.

*In Committee*

The Deputy Chairman of Committees (Mr Nanovich) in the Chair; Mr Hassell (Minister for Police and Traffic) in charge of the Bill.

The amendments made by the Council were as follows—

No. 1.

Clause 42, page 33, line 8—Delete “(2) On the publication” and substitute the following—

“(2) Subject to this section, on the publication”

No. 2.

Clause 42, page 33, after line 14—Insert after subclause (2) the following subclauses—

“(3) The Minister shall cause a copy of every Order in Council made under subsection (1) to be laid on the Table of each House of Parliament within the first 14 sitting days of that House after the publication of that Order in Council in the *Gazette*.

(4) If a copy of an Order in Council made under subsection (1) is not laid on the Table of a House of Parliament in accordance with subsection (3), that

Order in Council ceases to have effect when that copy is not so laid, but without affecting the validity or curing the invalidity of anything done or omitted to be done in good faith before that Order in Council so ceases to have effect.

(5) If either House of Parliament passes a resolution, of which notice has been given within the first 14 sitting days of that House after a copy of the relevant Order in Council made under subsection (1) has been laid on the Table of that House under subsection (3), that that Order in Council be disallowed, that Order in Council thereupon ceases to have effect, but the disallowance of that Order in Council does not affect the validity or cure the invalidity of anything done or omitted to be done in good faith before the passing of that resolution."

Mr O'CONNOR: I move—

That amendment No. 1 made by the Council be agreed to.

Mr CARR: This is a fairly minor amendment, at least it is minor in the context of the major matters dealt with in the Bill. It is an amendment which gives the Parliament power to disallow an Order in Council. We in the Opposition have no objection to it. As one studies the parliamentary record of this Bill's passage through the Parliament, one will note that a Labor Party member, the Hon. Howard Olney, made the suggestion in the other place that this amendment be inserted. There may have been other people who supported that view, but from the parliamentary point of view, Mr Olney suggested this amendment. We are pleased to agree with it.

We are pleased with this amendment and some other amendments which have been agreed to and this Bill leaves the Parliament as a slightly better Bill than it was when it was brought forward a few weeks ago. However, we are still not pleased with it. We see it as a basically bad Bill which will cause special problems. We look forward to the time when we can, in Government, make amendments ourselves.

Mr HASSELL: I thank the Opposition for its support of this amendment. As the member for Geraldton may recall, this amendment was also discussed in this Chamber and the former Opposition spokesman made comment on it. At the time I felt we could not accept the amendment; however, we examined the issue when it went to the other place and we decided, in

the light of comments put forward, that an amendment would improve the legislation in terms of making it clear that we have never set out to undermine any established principles or to take away any normal procedures in this legislation. The real aims of this Bill have been totally preserved and the amendments referred to by the member for Geraldton were made with our willing consent. I thank the member for Geraldton for his support, to the extent that he has given it, but I still regret that the Opposition has not recognised the overall thrust and importance of the Bill, and seen fit to give it a broader support. However, be that as it may, it is an issue for another day.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

Mr HASSELL: I move—

That amendment No. 2 made by the Council be agreed to.

It is an essential part of the amendments to effect the objective of giving this Chamber the clear power to disallow a variation of the schedule.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

### *Report*

Resolutions reported, the report adopted, and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

## **METROPOLITAN MARKET AMENDMENT BILL**

### *Second Reading*

Debate resumed from 17 September.

MR EVANS (Warren) [2.57 p.m.]: The amendments as they stand are reasonable but there is one matter which should be included as an amendment and that concerns the Carnarvon growers who have made representations to me. I would like to speak about the proposal that they have suggested. At the onset, however, I will deal with the amendment contained in the Bill before the House to ensure that the Bill is dealt with in its proper sequence and perspective.

This Bill is one that involves a number of provisions and most of these appear to be desirable in the light of the present-day marketing situation. The first purpose is to give the power to the trust to control the wholesale marketing of fruit and vegetables within 70 kilometres of the Perth GPO, and this will be known as the prescribed area. I point out that in Victoria the distance of control extends as far as 100 kilometres and in Paris it is 75 kilometres so the

reason for the 70 kilometres in this State is probably for convenience.

I am informed that this will not affect the farmers' markets which have become popular in the Fremantle and Midland areas. In the main, they simply serve as a direct outlet for the sale of various goods from producers of those areas. I believe a certain amount of wholesaling is being carried out at these markets and they will have to be kept under close scrutiny to ensure that they do not expand and develop beyond an acceptable level. The situation with regard to markets is that it is taken to be a rule of thumb that it needs a population of 750 000 to keep a market viable.

It will be quite some time before Perth can support another market of the size of the existing West Perth Metropolitan Markets and it is for that reason it is desirable to ensure that the present markets are not jeopardised. As far as the site is concerned, it would appear that it is in the most optimum position. It has been suggested that markets be established at Kewdale and Cannington, and at Midland—on the land made available by the closure of the abattoirs. The tendency to establish further markets might be strong but in terms of geography alone a problem would arise. The producers living in Spearwood would have long distances to travel if the market was established at Midland and this would apply also to producers living in Wanneroo. Another problem would be that customers would be placed in the situation where they, too, would have to travel long distances.

Mr Nanovich: Do you think that with the freeway development the markets are situated in an ideal position at the moment?

Mr EVANS: Until the population expands I do not see any reason for the markets to be moved. They are situated in a convenient position for people travelling from the Spearwood and Wanneroo areas via the freeway; the distance from both those areas being equal. Producers travelling from the Midland area have a similar distance to travel.

Looking at it geographically, the present position of the markets would appear to be the most suitable. At times the traffic is fairly dense and it is remarkable that everyone at the markets knows exactly what they are doing. Occasionally I visit the markets in the early morning in order to maintain my contacts and it is an enjoyable experience—as is the breakfast that is served afterwards. I do not know whether additional land could be made available from Westrail, but if it could the expansion problem would be resolved for the future. If this was so, it would mean that

the markets would retain the advantage that they have and the problem would be solved up to the turn of the century.

The Market Trust has had a difficult task in maintaining not only administration but also the problems associated with transportation to and from the markets. I believe that the location of the markets at the present time is the most suitable and this has been the finding of surveys. The most recent survey was conducted by WAIT. A report was issued in 1974-76 and the recommendation contained in it was that there should be no change and at that stage there had not been any great alteration beyond the 1990s.

The survey conducted by WAIT was carried out after consultation with the Town Planning Authority and the MRPA. The report suggested that there be no pressure for immediate expansion—although there is always a certain amount of pressure—because at the present time the existing site is fairly secure.

The world philosophy with regard to markets is to have a major market which is available to the producers to determine the most satisfactory prices of vegetables and other goods. The growers who have gone into direct selling to such a large extent obviously wish to retain the open market as it exists. The Western Australian Vegetable Market Growers Association and kindred organisations have been contacted and they are satisfied with the situation as it is at present, as is the Western Australian Fruit Growers' Association.

The interesting point is that the development of the "farmer market" in the outer fringes of the metropolitan area does not seem to have been much cause for concern. It is felt that customers may not be getting the bargains they are led to believe are available, in respect of either quality or price. However, problems could occur if wholesaling creeps in to a degree where it affects the total market structure in the metropolitan area.

The amendment providing for a prescribed area within a radius of 70 kilometres of the city centre, in which prescribed produce may not be sold, should resolve any problems which may arise in this area. A desirable feature of the controls is that meat and fish are not included in the list of prescribed produce.

The Minister referred to the fact that penalties are to be substantially increased; the Opposition supports this move. If penalties are to remain as meaningful as when they were first instituted, they must be updated from time to time. The proposed increase from \$100 to \$400 is not

indefensible, and the Opposition has no objection to that suggested increase.

The provision that the trust shall collate statistics certainly is most necessary. Little opportunity is available to carry out meaningful research unless the basic statistics are available to those who may seek to make projections into the future, to effect economies, to restructure traffic flow, or to undertake other matters. The statistics to be collected will have a wealth of use, and we believe it to be a desirable feature of this legislation.

The power of the trust to promote the sale of produce is a laudable feature of the Bill. The matter of promotion is becoming increasingly important in this day and age. I do not suppose any business could succeed unless it conducted a satisfactory promotion campaign to ensure consumers were aware of the service it offered. In this respect, the trust is doing no more than keeping abreast of the times. The "golden egg" campaign and recent Lamb Board promotions are good examples of promotions which the experts consider to be very desirable and effective. If the trust can embark on that sort of campaign, it can be only to the ultimate benefit of producers and consumers alike.

The original Act provided that the trust shall comprise five members, to be appointed by the Governor, one of whom shall be a representative of the producers, one a representative of the consumers and one, a nominee of the Perth City Council. The Bill provides that the nominee of the Perth City Council shall be a practising councillor, which will have the desired effect of providing a much more direct contact between the Metropolitan Markets and the Perth City Council.

The final provisions in the legislation are machinery amendments in connection with terminology, and no objection is raised to them.

I understand some degree of planning has been initiated. The only point which might be made is in connection with the siting of the operations of the trust, because if the export market develops as it may, problems may arise. A dramatic increase has been experienced in the export of cauliflowers and other vegetables; however, as this activity has been on a direct basis, it has had little effect on the market. It is rather interesting that the vegetable principally exported from Western Australia is the carrot. This is partially due to the fact that the sandy soils close to the metropolitan area produce carrots of high quality.

Having made those general points in support of the Bill, I turn now to the representation of the

trust. Representations have been made by the Carnarvon Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, the Carnarvon Market Growers Association, and the Carnarvon Shire Council. In fact, I understand the Carnarvon Shire Clerk is preparing a submission on behalf of the council, and that the council is anxious that the Bill be delayed until that submission is received by the Minister. Representations have been made to the Deputy Premier, to the Honorary Minister Assisting the Minister for Housing, to the Minister for Agriculture, and also to a member in another place.

A fairly full account of the matter was contained in last Thursday's issue of the *News of the North*. The article pointed out that shire councillors and representatives of the two growers' associations in Carnarvon met Government Ministers to discuss local representation on the Metropolitan Market Trust. The article went on to state—

They stressed the urgency of the situation and said that they had been writing to the Minister for Agriculture, Mr Old, since 1980 and met him as late as July this year to request that a person from the area be appointed to the Trust.

The requests were denied.

In his July letter to the council, Mr Old said: "During my recent visit to Carnarvon the matter of an appointment of a person from Carnarvon to the Metropolitan Market Trust was raised.

"Last year when this matter was also raised, I advised that I would be prepared to examine membership of the Trust and your submission when the term of office of present members expires in August 1981."

Sir Charles Court: It is not intended to put the Bill through all stages of both Houses until the Minister has had further discussions with people in Carnarvon. We do not intend to bulldoze the Bill through. However, it is desired to make some progress. The Minister has already had some talks with these people, as promised, and further talks will be held before the Bill goes through Parliament to make sure we have considered further their representations.

Mr EVANS: I am glad to hear that; I acknowledge the Premier's interjection.

At the appropriate time, I intend to move that the Bill be referred to a Select Committee to determine whether there is any reason there should not be a Carnarvon representative on the trust. Of course, there could be reasons for non-

representation which are not apparent at the moment.

Mr Nanovich: Why should there not be a Wanneroo representative?

Mr Old: Or a Manjimup representative?

Mr EVANS: Hold on! I will deal with the point that the member for Whitford made.

Mr Old: Do not forget Manjimup.

Mr EVANS: It would be nice to see the good country involved; but I do not think the Manjimup area has as great a stake as has Carnarvon. The special situation of Carnarvon warrants special consideration.

I was referring to the letter sent to the Carnarvon Shire by the Minister. In that letter, the Minister continued—

As that time is now approaching I have carefully considered the matter of representation in relation to the activities of the Trust, and in particular, to the redevelopment of the market site that is now being planned.

At a time of major development, stability in the Trust composition would seem desirable. For this reason I am not anxious to make any marked changes.

That is not a very convincing or valid argument. One member above the number of six would not upset the stability, particularly in the light of the present members of the trust, and their backgrounds. It might be a good time for a new representative to cut his teeth.

The argument put forward by the Minister in that letter could hardly be taken as a basic reason. More likely, he could expect an approach by other areas for representation. It is most likely that coloured the thinking of the Government. I note that my friend from Whitford agrees with me.

Mr Nanovich: I did not say that.

Mr EVANS: I know that, but the member is nodding his head.

Mr Nanovich: I merely smiled at the member for Warren.

Mr EVANS: At the markets, the member for Whitford would finish up with a case of lettuce if he carried on nodding in that approving manner!

I would like to touch on the reasons put forward by the Carnarvon growers. They have said that they are dissatisfied with their representatives. In the newspaper report, the following appears—

They said that three of the five members of the Trust were agents who dominated it.

There is the basic reason for some feeling of distrust in the operation of the trust. The report continues—

There were no negotiations, no notifications, no recourse for the altering of prices—"Our man down there argues with us, not with them," one grower said.

It was for the same sort of reason that America fought the War of Independence—no taxation without representation. In 1980, Carnarvon produced goods worth \$8 392 million for the Perth markets. The commission paid to the agents was over \$1 million. That is the contribution being made by the Carnarvon growers to the metropolitan markets.

The complaint was, "Our man down there argues with us, not with them". That must rankle to some extent. That is understandable. It is a natural kind of reaction.

Mr Old: What do they mean by their man down there?

Mr EVANS: Their agent. Instead of arguing for what they should be receiving, he is arguing with them, justifying his performance.

The growers point out that in the course of a year there is very little difference in the prices that they receive. The difference in price might be a couple of cents, as a norm. However, they do not think they have proper representation from their agents, who are on the defensive against them. The agents are not doing anything to improve the lot of the growers.

I point out that 70 per cent of all the bananas sold in Perth are grown in the Carnarvon area. Another complaint is that the ripening of bananas is such a lucrative business, each of the agents has his own ripening room. The ripening of bananas is not a very complex operation; and the returns are so good that all the agents have become involved in it. The Carnarvon bananas are an important commodity when 70 per cent of all the bananas sold in Perth come from that area.

While we are on the subject, I indicate that 15 per cent of all vegetables sold in Perth come from Carnarvon, and 90 per cent of the off-season winter vegetables come from that source. Those vegetables include tomatoes, capsicums, pumpkins, beans, egg fruit, zucchinis, cucumbers, and sweet potatoes. The Carnarvon area makes that contribution to the metropolitan area, and to the operations of the metropolitan marketing system.

Quite reasonable grounds exist for the Carnarvon growers to seek representation on the trust. We have to consider whether a trust of five

members becomes unwieldy; whether an even number of six makes it unmanageable in terms of a deadlock on a matter of policy; or whether an increase to seven would prevent the body from acting effectively as a trust. These matters deserve consideration.

I recognise that there are practical difficulties in debating the number to be on the trust. However, in view of the amount of produce coming from Carnarvon, and the feeling that the growers are not being represented and treated properly, that grievance ought to be considered.

Rather than this House deciding in the light of the complexity of the issues that will be raised, it would be preferable to refer this Bill to a Select

Committee. It is my intention to move that at the appropriate time. I give that indication now.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Nanovich.

### QUESTIONS

Questions were taken at this stage.

### ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE: SPECIAL

**SIR CHARLES COURT** (Nedlands—Premier)  
[3.47 p.m.]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday, 13 October.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 3.48 p.m.*

## QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

### TRAFFIC: DRIVERS' LICENCES

#### *Photographs*

2068. Mr GREWAR, to the Minister for Police and Traffic:

- (1) Has the Police Department investigated the advantages of introducing photo drivers' licences?
- (2) If "Yes", what are foreseen as the main problems in implementing such licences?
- (3) If remote country areas present problems, would it not be possible for the present type of licence to be available to people unable to obtain a photo licence?
- (4) Would it not be possible to have photography equipment circulated to country police stations on a regular rostering basis?
- (5) What would be the costs of establishing a photo licensing system in Western Australia?

Mr HASSELL replied:

- (1) No. The question of introducing photographic drivers' licences has been investigated by the Road Traffic Authority.
- (2) To introduce such a system will require the photographing of every driver in Western Australia, placing the photograph on the licence and implementing a system to maintain suitable records for future renewals and providing duplicate licences as required. Additionally, to achieve the benefits photographic licences offer for enforcement, legislation would be needed to make it compulsory to carry a driver's licence at all times when driving. This is not a requirement at present.
- (3) This would defeat the purpose of introducing photographic identification on drivers' licences.
- (4) Yes, if the considerable cost of the whole scheme were accepted as justified, and if the scheme was accepted.
- (5) It is estimated that the cost of introducing photographs on drivers' licences would be in excess of \$2 million. A recent and detailed estimating has not been calculated.

## PRISONS: PRISONERS

### *Remissions*

2071. Mr BRIAN BURKE, to the Chief Secretary:

- (1) Has the Government given consideration to any of the proposals in the Dixon report for remission of sentences?
- (2) If so, have any been accepted?
- (3) If "Yes" to (2), which recommendations have been accepted?

Mr HASSELL replied:

- (1) The Government is still considering all the recommendations including those relating to remission of sentence contained in the report of the committee of inquiry into the rate of imprisonment.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) Not applicable.

## ABORIGINES

### *National Aboriginal Conference*

2083. Mr A. D. TAYLOR, to the Chief Secretary:

- (1) With reference to the forthcoming elections for membership of the National Aboriginal Conference, will facilities be made available for inmates of prisons and other Government institutions to record a vote should they so wish?
- (2) If "Yes", during the period leading up to the election, will candidates for election be permitted reasonable access to such institutions or will candidates be excluded from any or all institutions?

Mr HASSELL replied:

- (1) Yes. The superintendents of all prisons under the control of the Department of Corrections have been instructed to co-operate with the Commonwealth authorities in the conducting of the National Aboriginal Conference elections on 17 October 1981.

In addition, these facilities will be provided at Police lock-ups, if requested.

- (2) Instructions have been circulated to all superintendents not to allow active campaigning by candidates or their representatives within prison boundaries. However, material acquainting electors of particular candidates may be distributed by superintendents to them through normal institutional channels.

## PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

### *Desalination: Aquapore Reverse Osmosis*

2084. Mr GREWAR, to the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) Has the Public Works Department carried out any tests on the aquapore reverse osmosis desalinators as developed by Dr Robert Wechsler?
- (2) If "Yes"—
  - (a) are the claims made for the equipment accurate;
  - (b) how does the price for conversion of sea water to potable drinking water compare with other techniques?
- (3) If "No" to (1), does the Public Works Department plan such studies?
- (4) Does the department consider such equipment would be economical to operate in inland or coastal towns where saline ground waters are available, and when the cost of providing dams and catchments would be very high?

Mr MENSAROS replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) (a) and (b) Not applicable.
- (3) No. The Public Works Department has carried out sufficient studies in the past to enable it to adequately assess the value of reverse osmosis desalination plants.
- (4) When reviewing the various options available as sources of potable water for town supplies, the Public Works Department considers the alternative of desalinating brackish or saline water.

## EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

### *Apprentices*

2085. Mr TONKIN, to the Minister for Labour and Industry:

- (1) Has the expiry of the Commonwealth Government's \$1 000 bonus for the employment of apprentices in the metal,

electrical and building trades had any observable effect upon the employment of apprentices?

- (2) If so, what are the details?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

- (1) and (2) It is difficult to assess what impact, if any, was caused by the \$1 000 scheme or the expiry of the scheme; however, the overall existing apprenticeship numbers in Western Australia compare favourably with figures from previous years.

## BOATS

### *Accidents*

2086. Mr TONKIN, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Has there been any increase in—

- (a) fatal;
- (b) non-fatal,

accidents associated with power boats on the one hand and yachts on the other, in the Swan River over the past 12 months?

- (2) What is the position in each of the categories referred to in the above with respect to accidents in the Indian Ocean?
- (3) What are the chief causes for such accidents?

Mr RUSHTON replied:

- (1) to (3) This information is being collated and I will send it to the member shortly.

2087. *This question was postponed.*

## EDUCATION: PRE-PRIMARY

### *Camboon*

2088. Mr TONKIN, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) Are the services of teacher-aides to be dispensed with at the Camboon pre-primary school?
- (2) If so, when is this likely to occur?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) Not applicable.

## EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

### *Disabled Persons*

2089. Mr TONKIN, to the Minister for Labour and Industry:

- (1) How does the employment of disabled people compare to the position at the same time in 1980?
- (2) What State governmental provision is there for the training of the disabled to enable them to take advantage of employment opportunities?
- (3) What is being done to promote the employment of disabled in this State?
- (4) How successful has such a promotion been?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

- (1) to (4) I assume the member is referring to employment of disabled people in State Government departments and instrumentalities.

This information is being sought and I will advise the member by letter as soon as it is available.

## SHOPPING

### *Checkout Operators*

2090. Mr TONKIN, to the Minister for Labour and Industry:

- (1) Is he aware that some shops insist upon assistants who work at checkouts never sitting down even though there is no one to serve?
- (2) Is he aware of the possible strain this puts on adolescent females when they have to stand for long hours when it is not necessary to do so?
- (3) What steps will he take to provide relief in this matter?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

- (1) to (3) Conditions of employment other than conditions contained in legislation or awards are matters between employers and employees and should remain so.

If legislative or award conditions are being breached, there are clear-cut avenues to be followed for the lodgement of complaints.

## SHOPPING

### *Trolleys*

2091. Mr TONKIN, to the Minister for Local Government:

- (1) Is action intended so as to lessen the problems associated with shopping trolleys in car-parks, included among which is damage to motor vehicles?
- (2) If so, what are the details?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

- (1) Not by me.
- (2) Answered by (1).

## HOUSING

### *Report: Social Welfare Action Group*

2092. Mr TONKIN, to the Honorary Minister Assisting the Minister for Housing:

- (1) Has he received a submission entitled "Security Needs Specific to State Housing Accommodation: A Report prepared by the social welfare action group, June, 1981"?
- (2) If so, what action has the Government taken or intends to take, with respect to rectifying some of the problems outlined in the submission?

Mr LAURANCE replied:

- (1) and (2) I am not aware of this report.

## HEALTH: CLUBS

### *Life Membership*

2093. Mr TONKIN, to the Minister for Consumer Affairs:

- (1) Is he aware of the position in which life members of Ian Goodwin's Health Club have been denied the privileges of life membership?
- (2) What is the Government doing to rectify the situation?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) The present position is unclear in requiring the present proprietors to extend life membership facilities to members without imposing any additional levy.

In the circumstances, the Bureau of Consumer Affairs suggests that any life members experiencing problems should discuss those problems with an officer of the bureau.

## CULTURAL AFFAIRS

### *Films: Projection Operators*

2094. Mr TONKIN, to the Minister for Fuel and Energy:

- (1) Are licences for cinema projection operators being phased out?
- (2) If so, when will it be no longer necessary for such licences to be held by operators?
- (3) What is the reason for such licences being phased out?
- (4) Is it a fact that his immediate predecessor refused to receive a delegation from the holders of such licences?
- (5) Is he prepared to receive a delegation from the persons concerned?

Mr P. V. JONES replied:

- (1) to (5) Consideration has been given to removing the requirement for licensing of cinema projection operators.

With modern technological advances, there are now no safety related grounds for requiring operator licences, as details of safety are not directly related to a licensing requirement, and the removal of such requirement has no bearing on the necessary safety standards required.

I am not aware that my predecessor refused to receive a delegation from the holders of such licences. I declined to meet a delegation during April of this year, after considering all matters relevant to the situation, because I felt such a meeting would not achieve any useful purpose. I do not think the position has changed materially since April.

## EDUCATION: SCHOOL OVALS

### *Use: Fees*

2095. Mr TONKIN, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) Which body determines fees to be charged to outside organisations which use school ovals?

- (2) Is the cost for such use left completely open or is there an upper limit prescribed by regulation or in some other way?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

- (1) The principal of the school.
- (2) The cost is by negotiation between the user and the principal.

## TRAFFIC: MOTOR VEHICLES

### *Child Restraining Devices*

2096. Mr TONKIN, to the Minister for Police and Traffic:

- (1) Are there still unsatisfactory child restraining devices being used in motor vehicles?
- (2) Is the incidence of the use of child restraining devices satisfactory?
- (3) Are there any figures which indicate whether the use of such devices has improved or otherwise during 1981?
- (4) If so, what are the details?

Mr HASSELL replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) No. While the use of child restraining devices in Western Australia compares well with use in other States, it cannot be considered satisfactory until all children are restrained.
- (3) Yes, following the introduction of new regulations on 29 May 1981.
- (4) Observations of restraint usage by children have been made on week days outside selected shopping centres. Results which show an improvement has occurred are:

18 September 1980	40% restrained
28 & 29 May 1981	53% restrained
11 & 12 June 1981	57% restrained
Road Traffic Authority enforcement and National Safety Council education is continuing with the expectation of improvements.	

## CONSUMER AFFAIRS

### *Consumer Products Safety Committee*

2097. Mr TONKIN, to the Minister for Consumer Affairs:

Who are at present the members of the consumer products safety committee and what interests do they represent?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

Members of the consumer products safety committee are not chosen to represent a particular interest. The Consumer Affairs Act requires members other than the chairman, who is a bureau officer, to be persons who in the opinion of the Minister have expertise in the area of product safety.

Present members of the committee are:

Mr P. R. Glanville	Acting Chairman Legal Officer, Bureau of Consumer Affairs
Member	Area of Expertise
Dr D. Spence	Health
Dr R. S. Lugg	Health
Mr A. G. Batten	Industrial design
Mr J. B. Boulton	National Safety Council
Mr D. Piggford	Engineering
Mr K. Peckham	Electrical trades

Present deputy members are:

Mr M. Marinovich	Deputy Chairman Executive Officer, Bureau of Consumer Affairs
Deputy	Area of Expertise
Dr J. Cullen	Health
Dr K. C. Wan	Health
Mr M. Upton	Industrial design
Mr M. Palmer	National Safety Council
Mr P. Oliver	Engineering
Mr T. J. Cook	Engineering trades

## CYCLES

### *Advisory Committee*

2098. Mr TONKIN, to the Minister for Local Government:

Who are the members of the advisory committee on bicycle policy and which interests do they represent?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

- Mr J. R. Watson (Chairman)—Department of Local Government
- Mr A. Abbott—National Safety Council
- Mr F. Barclay—Town Planning Department
- Mr P. Gralton—Local Government Association
- Mr G. Hayes—Education Department
- Mr P. Moses—Main Roads Department
- Mr D. Neill—Cyclists' organisations
- Mr B. Robinson—Cyclists' organisations
- Mr J. Sharp—Department for Youth, Sport and Recreation
- Mr M. Simms—Road Traffic Authority.

## EDUCATION

### *Speech Therapy*

2099. Mr BRIAN BURKE, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) What facilities currently exist for specialised teaching of speech impaired children in Western Australian Government schools?
- (2) How many speech therapists are attached to Western Australian primary schools (Government)?
- (3) Has consideration been given to providing special classes for students who suffer solely from impaired speech as opposed to placing them in remedial classes or in training centres?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

- (1) No specialised formal provision is made within schools for children whose sole handicap is speech impairment.
- (2) The Education Department does not employ speech therapists. Speech therapy services are provided by community and child health services and the division for the intellectually handicapped.
- (3) Yes.

## LAND

### *Transfer of Land Act*

2100. Mr SKIDMORE, to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

- (1) Under the Transfer of Land Act is there any requirement that makes it necessary for all pages forming part of an agreement for the purchase of land or real estate to be initialled by all of the parties to that agreement?
- (2) If "No", would the Minister have the Act amended to provide that all pages of such agreements must be initialled by all parties to ensure that no alteration could occur to the agreement prior to its registration?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) No.

It is necessary to distinguish between agreements entered into in relation to land and the documents lodged for registration as a result of those agreements. The agreements are not registered in the Titles Office.

## ABORIGINES

### *Aboriginal Advancement Council*

2101. Mr SKIDMORE, to the Minister representing the Minister for Conservation and the Environment:

- (1) Are any proposals being made that would grant public access to the property owned by the Aboriginal Advancement Council situated at 121 O'Brien Road, Giddegannup?
- (2) If "Yes", what are those proposals and what is the rationale that allows the determination to grant public access to privately owned land?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

- (1) No. However, recommendation M18 (page 203) of the system six study report refers in part to the property.
- (2) Not applicable.

## LAND

### *Guildford: Right-of-way*

2102. Mr SKIDMORE, to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

- (1) Would the Minister give the present position of ownership of a right-of-way situated in the townsite of Guildford that runs off Market Street and behind lots 12, 11, 10, 9, 8 and 7 Stephen Street in a northerly direction, and then turns roughly north-east to come out again onto Market Street behind lots 3 and 4 in James Street?
- (2) Are there any restrictions placed upon the use of this right-of-way by any authority?
- (3) Does any one owner of the lots adjacent to the right-of-way have any greater rights over the easement than any other owner?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

- (1) and (3) This information is readily available to the public at the Office of Titles and Deeds.

- (2) This information is available from the relevant authorities.

## WATER RESOURCES: RATES

### *Overpayment*

2103. Mr SKIDMORE, to the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) In relation to the overpayment of water rates, is it the policy of the Water Board not to pay interest on moneys obtained by the Metropolitan Water Board in overpayment of water rates?
- (2) If a ratepayer has been overcharged by the Metropolitan Water Board for water rates through no fault of his own, is it not reasonable to expect the Metropolitan Water Board to pay interest on those moneys?
- (3) In view of (2) above, would he authorise interest to be paid to Ms Helen Curley of 70 Albemarle Way, High Wycombe, who has been charged for water rates on vacant land instead of on land with a house upon it, resulting in an overpayment of water rates since 1974-75 of \$406.65?

Mr MENSAROS replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) No. In providing hydraulic services to a community of some 900 000 people, genuine errors do sometimes occur but cases such as this are very rare. Also there is no legal provision for such interest to be paid.
- (3) No. I understand—as pointed out in (2) above—that I would not have legal power to do so.

## STOCK: SHEEP

### *Research Programme*

2104. Mr EVANS, to the Minister for Agriculture:

- (1) Is he aware of the concern expressed by Professor Swann in *The West Australian* 24 September 1981, that a sheep health research programme has been jeopardised by the Commonwealth Government's fund cutting razor gang's decision to stop funding extension service programmes?

- (2) What are the details of the programme to which Professor Swann is referring?
- (3) Does the State Government intend to fund this programme to ensure the effort and cost of work to date, is not lost?
- (4) (a) Are there any other extension service programmes or projects which will be curtailed because of lack of financing by the Federal Government; and  
(b) if so, what are the details of each?

Mr OLD replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) The programme examines the physical and financial benefits of a planned flock health approach on a group of farms.
- (3) As a result of a decision of the Commonwealth administrative review committee, the Commonwealth ceased direct funding of the Commonwealth extension services grant. This grant was previously composed of three components. One was directed to State Departments of Agriculture, another was used to fund national projects in accordance with the decision of the Department of Primary Industry, and a third, the other agencies portion, was administered through the State Department of Agriculture.

The project in question was funded from the national projects portion. The Commonwealth Department of Primary Industry advises that this part of the grant has been discontinued.

I have suggested to the Murdoch University authorities that, in the first instance, they take up with the Commonwealth the question of continued funding.

- (4) (a) The Department of Agriculture has a number of projects formerly funded by the Commonwealth extension services grant;  
(b) under the taxation disbursement arrangements, that part of the CESG previously made available through State Departments of Agriculture, was included in the general revenue assistance grant to the States. These funds will be included in the department's budget for 1981-82.

## HEALTH: NURSING HOME

*Nadezda*

2105. Mr HODGE, to the Minister for Health:
  - (1) Further to question 1255 of 1981 relating to Nadezda Nursing Home, can he advise if alternative accommodation has been provided for the residents of Nadezda Nursing Home?
  - (2) Is it a fact that the nursing home licence for Nadezda expired on 30 September?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) Alternative accommodation will be ready for occupation in approximately one month's time.
- (2) Yes. It has been extended to 31 October 1981 while the alternative accommodation is being upgraded to suit adults.

## EUTHANASIA

*Western Australian Voluntary Euthanasia Society*

2106. Mr GRILL, to the Minister for Health:
  - (1) Is the Government aware of a document presently being distributed by the Western Australian voluntary euthanasia society and known as a "living will"?
  - (2) What are the implications of such documents when executed?
  - (3) What is the Government's attitude towards the aims of such documentation?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) When executed the document is purely an expression of the wishes of the person signing it and, as stated on the reverse of the form, has no legal binding on a doctor.
- (3) The Government does not support the concept and has given no encouragement to the promotion of such a scheme. Its implementation would result in a breach of the law.

## GAMBLING

*Prosecutions*

2107. Mr GRILL, to the Chief Secretary:
  - (1) How many prosecutions have been brought under the gaming laws of this State during the last six months?

- (2) Against whom were the prosecutions brought?
- (3) Where the prosecution related to some premises, what were the names and addresses of such premises?

Mr HASSELL replied:

- (1) to (3) Where police have sufficient evidence against a person for the offence of assisting in conducting premises as a common gaming house and being found on the premises of a common gaming house without lawful excuse prosecutions are brought. Over the past six months there have been 397 such prosecutions brought under the gaming laws of the State.

### HOUSING: RENTAL

#### *Emergent*

2108. Mr WILSON, to the Honorary Minister Assisting the Minister for Housing:

- (1) Adverting to his answer to question 2058 of 1981 relating to accommodation for the Hansen family, what solution is envisaged to the accommodation problems of the affected families outside conventional housing?
- (2) Is consideration being given to housing these families in substandard housing, without running water and safe power supplies, at Saunders Street, Guildford?

Mr LAURANCE replied:

- (1) I am awaiting advice of the Chairman of the State Housing Commission and the Chairman of the Aboriginal Housing Board in this regard.
- (2) No.

### WATER RESOURCES: GIRRAWHEEN

#### *Quality*

2109. Mr WILSON, to the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) Further to the answer given to question 2053 of 1981 relating to foul water sampling at Girrawheen, what tests were carried out on the samples of affected water?

- (2) Is a flow meter in use in the affected area to regulate the amount of chlorine added to the water?
- (3) What was the re-arrangement of the distribution system referred to in his previous answer?

Mr MENSAROS replied:

- (1) The taste and odour found recently in the water at Royden Way, Girrawheen was similar to intermittent occurrences in some northern suburbs during October-November 1980 and May-June 1981. The sample in question was tested for pH and chlorine residual. In addition, water supplied to the Girrawheen area is analysed weekly for total dissolved salts, total hardness, turbidity, colour, taste and odour, iron, manganese, sodium, chloride, chlorine residual and micro-organisms.
- (2) All service reservoirs which supply the Girrawheen area have flow meters installed to regulate chlorine addition.
- (3) Water to the Girrawheen area is supplied through a complex network of pipes. By alteration of valves in the area the water flow pattern was altered and the taste and odour problem dispersed.

### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

#### CULTURAL AFFAIRS: FILMS

##### *Projection Operators*

578. Mr TONKIN, to the Minister for Fuel and Energy:

My question relates to question on notice 2094 today directed to the Minister. From his answer it would seem the Minister is not informed that the safety of the public is at risk if untrained and unqualified cinematograph operators are permitted to operate the high voltage equipment at cinemas. My question is—

- (1) Is he aware that untrained and unqualified operators are being employed at the present time, which seems to be an illegal practice?
- (2) If not, will he acquaint himself with the position?
- (3) If he is informed that these untrained and unqualified operators are being employed, what does he intend to do about this illegal practice?

Mr P. V. JONES replied:

- (1) to (3) The answer I gave to the question on notice did not use the word "untrained" or have any relationship to training; it related to licensing and the licensing system as administered by the licensing board. My answer indicated it had nothing to do with safety. Any proposals in regard to safety are already covered under other regulations.

Mr Tonkin: It is a question of safety.

Mr P. V. JONES: But not the licensing of people as defined by a board. I am referring to the second part of the member's question. If unqualified people who have not passed the required safety standards are working, clearly there is a breach of the regulations. I would expect the member to let me know of any cases so that I can deal with them.

Mr Tonkin: I will.

Mr P. V. JONES: Please do.

#### STATE FINANCE: BORROWINGS PROGRAMME

##### *SEC: Interest*

579. Mr GRILL, to the Minister for Fuel and Energy:

- (1) What effect are high interest rates having on SEC finances?
- (2) Is it correct that the SEC is experiencing difficulty in making payment of debts presently falling due for payment?
- (3) If so, for what reasons and in what areas?

Mr P. V. JONES replied:

- (1) The effect of high interest rates is that the SEC is paying more for its money.
- (2) No.
- (3) Not applicable.

#### EDUCATION: DEPARTMENT

##### *Staff: Group Certificates*

580. Mr PEARCE, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) Is it a fact that group certificates for Education Department employees on

accouchement leave are not being mailed out but are being held to be collected?

- (2) If so, why?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

- (1) and (2) Group certificates of employees on accouchement leave or other forms of extended leave are no longer sent to their schools. This policy was adopted because schools, in a number of instances, did not have an accurate mailing address for a teacher on leave. When the teacher advises the department of his or her address on leave the group certificate is forwarded to that address or the employee may elect, if he or she prefers, to pick it up personally.

#### METROPOLITAN WATER SUPPLY, SEWERAGE, AND DRAINAGE AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)

##### *Water Supply Union: Comments*

581. Mr HERZFELD, to the Minister for Water Resources:

I refer him to an article on page 4 of tonight's edition of the *Daily News* which has the heading "Water men warn". I refer him specifically to a contention by Mr Piantadosi that "everything we have raised, the Government hasn't had an answer for". I ask—

- (1) Is that contention accurate?
- (2) If not, do the matters raised by the Opposition on the subject of a Bill which was before the House today indicate they are simply stooges for this union and its mouthpiece in this place?

Mr MENSAROS replied:

- (1) and (2) It is quite an interesting little article and I read it just a few minutes ago. I think it indicates the source from which the Opposition gets its instructions. It also proves correct the introductory comments I made when replying to the second reading debate this morning.

Mr Brian Burke: The million dollar man.

Mr MENSAROS: As for the contention made by the secretary of the union, I can only say that quite some time ago, soon after I came to be in charge of this portfolio, I asked Mr Piantadosi to come to my office, where we had quite an amicable chat. He asserted he was apolitical, which I welcomed. I said to him, "If that is so, maybe—"

Mr Tonkin: Like local government.

Mr MENSAROS: —instead of going to the Press first you might like to come to me to discuss matters should you have any complaints". I have never seen him since.

### CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

#### *Minors*

582. Mr BRIAN BURKE, to the Premier:

Noting the Premier's public statements and attitude on capital punishment, I ask him what his view is of the proposition that capital punishment should be abolished in the case of minors to avoid the horrid spectacle of 15 and 16-year-olds being installed in death row?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

I can only assume the Leader of the Opposition has introduced this point to get some emotive response. As far as the Government is concerned it has no intention of changing the law in relation to capital punishment. I remind the Leader of the Opposition that the question of the Royal prerogative is still there. Successive Governments have used it as and when they thought fit. There is no need to change the law for that or any other reason at the moment.

### TRAFFIC: MOTOR VEHICLES

#### *Child Restraining Devices*

583. Mr TONKIN, to the Minister for Police and Traffic:

My question follows his answer to my question on notice 2096 today. The Minister admitted that unsatisfactory child restraining devices were still being used in motor vehicles. What action is being taken to rectify the situation?

Mr HASSELL replied:

I think the member's question on notice was interpreted as a question about the use of child restraining devices rather than the devices themselves. There may have been a misreading of the question. I gather from his question without notice that he was referring to the devices themselves.

Mr Tonkin: That is what the question asked.

Mr HASSELL: I will have to get further information in relation to that aspect of the matter, although the second, third, and fourth parts of his question appear to have been correctly answered and interpreted.

### EDUCATION: NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

#### *Specific Learning Difficulties: Detection*

584. Mr PEARCE, to the Minister for Education:

Is it a fact that the Education Department, through its guidance section, will not extend the facilities for the detection of specific learning difficulties—including dyslexia—to students of non-Government primary schools?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question, although the question we received was—

Is it a fact that the guidance branch of the Education Department will not provide testing or advisory services to primary school students in non-Government primary schools?

The answer is, "No".

### COURT: LICENSING

#### *Aplak Pty. Ltd.*

585. Mr Herzfeld (for Mr GREWAR), to the Chief Secretary:

(1) Adverting to the recent refusal of an application by Aplak Pty. Ltd. for a package liquor licence in the township of

Laverton, could the Minister inform the House whether any of the members of the Licensing Court have ever visited that particular locality?

- (2) If the answer is "No", how could the court make a reasonably accurate assessment of the variable factors that are peculiar to the needs of residents of this important district in the north-eastern goldfields region?
- (3) Further, could the Minister persuade Licensing Court members to undertake a visit to Laverton to ascertain the social disadvantages that presently beset the residents of this burgeoning mining community?

Mr HASSELL replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question the answer to which is as follows—

- (1) to (3) Two members of the court have visited Laverton—one of them on two occasions.

Because of the court's knowledge of the area and the evidence which was adduced in the course of the application by Aplak Pty. Ltd., a visit by members of the Licensing Court to the area at this time is not considered necessary.

## SHOPPING

### *Trolleys*

586. Mr TONKIN, to the Premier:

Earlier today I addressed a question to the Minister for Local Government in which I asked whether action was intended with respect to shopping trolleys in car parks which frequently cause damage to motor vehicles. The Minister seemed to suggest the matter was not within her ambit.

Mrs Craig: I suggest you read the question as it was phrased. You had me out in the shopping centre pushing the trolley!

Mr Bryce: Now that would be a turn up!

Mr TONKIN: I ask the Premier within whose ambit is the problem of shopping trolleys which cause damage to cars parked in these areas?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

I shall have a look at the question as answered by the Minister and the question which has just been asked by the member and ascertain the situation. My understanding is the matter relates to private property and does not deal with something which occurs in a public place.

## RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT: PROJECTS

### *Interest Rates: Threat*

587. Mr BRYCE, to the Minister for Resources Development:

- (1) Does the Minister share the view of economic observers and writers throughout the nation that rising interest rates pose a very real threat to resource development projects?
- (2) Is the Minister aware of any proposed resource development project in Western Australia which may be cancelled or delayed as a result of recent dramatic escalations in interest rates?

Mr P. V. JONES replied:

- (1) As I have indicated already this afternoon quite obviously there is an effect, because the borrowers are paying more for their money; but the situation is not as clear-cut as the member for Ascot might suggest. In many instances some of the projects which are funded already—in other words, those in operation and those under construction, but more particularly those being contemplated where some feasibility work is being done—are competing in an international market; therefore, the cost at which money is borrowed for the project in Australia is compared with the cost of money used to establish the same project somewhere else in the world. It can be seen we do not only relate the present interest rate in Australia to what it was last year or the year before, but also we must relate it to the cost of money on an international basis.
- (2) Increasing interest rates quite clearly result in pressure on resource development projects, but it is not of the magnitude that would require any project to be wound down or closed completely, as far as I am aware.

## LIQUOR: WINES

*Expovin*

588. Mr BLAIKIE, to the Honorary Minister for Industrial Development and Commerce:

- (1) What is the involvement of Western Australian wine growers in the Expovin wine exhibition which is to be held in Melbourne in October 1981?
- (2) Which wine companies from the south-west of the State will be participating in Expovin?
- (3) What action has the Minister taken to encourage even greater participation by companies from the south-west?

Mr MacKINNON replied:

- (1) Eighteen Western Australian winemakers are to participate in an exhibition in Melbourne coordinated by the Department of Industrial Development and Commerce. It will be the largest Western Australian wine exhibition to be held in the Eastern States.

- (2) Of the 18 wine producers participating, six are from the south-west; i.e. from the Margaret River-Bunbury area. They are—

Wrights Wines  
Cullens Willyabrup Wines  
Vasse Felix  
Capel Vale Wines  
Peel Estate Wines  
Leschenault Wines

- (3) I have written to a number of non-participating wine companies requesting they reconsider their decisions. In addition I arranged for officers of my department to meet with the Margaret River Wine Producers and Grape Growers Association to explain the advantages of participation.

## RAILWAYS: MARSHALLING YARDS

*Meru*

589. Mr CARR, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Is the Minister aware that the Greenough Shire Council has decided to delete all reference to the proposed new

marshalling yards at Meru from its district zoning scheme and text, because of difficulty in getting Westrail to agree either to buy the land concerned or to indemnify the shire against claims for compensation for injurious affection?

- (2) Will the Minister undertake urgent consultations with Westrail and the shire to ensure that appropriate steps are taken to protect the availability of the marshalling yard site?

Mr RUSHTON replied:

- (1) and (2) I have had discussions with the shire and also with Westrail and I have sought to find a solution to the dilemma. My understanding is that a legal difficulty is preventing the matter from proceeding in the manner everyone hoped it would. I shall look at the circumstances put forward by the member, but it appears the question is framed in such a way that he condemns Westrail for the problem being experienced. I do not believe one can do that.

Mr Carr: I am not laying the blame on either party, but last night the local paper made it clear the council has made the statement that it will delete all references to the marshalling yards from its town planning scheme, because of the fact that it has been unable to come to an agreement with Westrail. I am just asking you, as Minister, to get the two parties and knock their heads together, if necessary, in order to arrive at a solution.

Mr RUSHTON: Goodwill has been shown on both sides in an endeavour to find a solution, but I will follow the matter through. My last understanding of the position was they were having difficulty in resolving a legal problem in regard to Westrail participating in the way that had been expected.

The Government had given approval to Westrail to take certain steps to acquire the land and it is only the recent difficulties which have prevented this occurring. I will certainly look at the matter and see if there is any other way to solve the problem.

## AGENT GENERAL

*London*

590. Mr BRIAN BURKE, to the Premier:

Is the Premier able to deny reports that the Minister for Lands is to be appointed Agent General in London and that there will be a reshuffle of portfolios within the Government which will include transferring the Minister for Health to the Transport portfolio?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

I point out to the Leader of the Opposition the greatest masters of kite flying are currently in Japan and they specialise in this art. In fact, it is a magnificent art form and I am not quite sure whether they include it in the performing arts, still life, or anything of that kind. They have produced some tremendous kites and the only difference between their kites and the kite the Leader of the Opposition has just constructed is that their kites fly and his does not.

Mr Brian Burke: Time will tell.

Sir CHARLES COURT: I emphasise that the Government has made no decision about the position of Agent General and, to my knowledge, it has no intention to make such a decision in the immediate future.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

*Recreation Officers*

591. Mr PEARCE, to the Minister for Recreation:

Is it a fact that the Government intends to transfer the responsibility for funding of recreation officers currently employed with local authorities but paid by the Community Recreation Council to local authorities?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

Matters of that kind are for the consideration of the Government in the formulation of the State Budget.

## RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT: "BOOM"

*Warning by English Stockbrokers*

592. Mr GRILL, to the Treasurer:

- (1) Has the Treasurer seen an article in today's *Daily News* reporting a statement by London stockbrokers Rowe and Pitman warning potential British investors to be wary of the "euphoria" surrounding the so-called resources boom in Australia?
- (2) In view of the fact that overseas investors presently play an important role in resource development in this State, is he concerned at such disparaging remarks concerning investment in our resource development companies?
- (3) What action can and will the Government take to ensure that investor confidence is retained in resource development industries?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

- (1) I have not seen the article to which the member referred, but out of curiosity I will look at it.
- (2) I am concerned always when people say things which are derogatory of, or in any way disadvantageous to, our State. I do not know the standing of the firm mentioned and I do not know the context in which the statement was made. For instance, this firm might have been referring to the Eastern States knowing that throughout the world most business concerns, financial institutions, and industrialists know that we in Western Australia have refused always to refer to our economic development as a resource boom.

Mr Grill: They were speaking generally.

Sir CHARLES COURT: We refer to our development in its proper context. It is proper and planned development that has gone on for many years and will continue to go on for a long time yet.

- (3) I will determine whether action is necessary after I have seen the article. The standing of this Government both in Australia and overseas is such that an article like the one to which the member referred usually is prepared by people who appear to be misinformed, and is not to be taken seriously. If any action is necessary I will take it.