



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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Thursday, 6 May 1999

Legislative Assembly

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THE ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Osborne) took the Chair at 9.00 am, and read prayers.

PEEL DEVIATION

Grievance

MR MARSHALL (Dawesville - Parliamentary Secretary) [9.06 am]: I have a grievance addressed to the minister representing the Minister for Transport. I query the Minister for Transport's decision, on information given to him by Main Roads, to delay the start of the building of the Peel deviation until 2010. Members may not realise it but an immense amount of traffic goes in and out of the south west on the Old Coast Road and the South Western Highway.

Mr Riebeling: Not today there isn't; it is all blocked off.

Mr MARSHALL: It is not blocked up. I came in on the Old Coast Road which was travelling quite smoothly. However, when I reached the Narrows area it took me 40 minutes to get through. Much needs to be done to improve the road system in Western Australia and I hope today's budget will allocate more money to that. The increased traffic on the South Western Highway and the Old Coast Road has become unsafe because those roads were not built to take the present levels of traffic. Quite correctly, a bypass road called the Peel deviation was shown in the Peel structure plan presented a few months ago. The deviation is a 38-kilometre stretch of road between Pinjarra Road in Ravenswood and Lake Clifton. In effect, the deviation means drivers heading south from Perth will bypass Mandurah, go around Gordon Road and enter the Pinjarra area, travel down the rear of the estuary and the Peel Inlet and come out at Lake Clifton. The road was costed at \$100m and the previous Minister for Transport raised an expectation that the road would be in place by 2005. Everyone in my electorate was happy with that because the road could be planned and the money could be raised as the traffic was growing all the time. The deviation was then ranked in the top four priority road projects in Western Australia. To have Main Roads now claim that a study of current predicted growth shows that the deviation will not be needed until 2010 is nonsense and it is incorrect. The so-called "study" which reached this decision began in 1998 and was based on 1997 figures. The 1997 figures showed that 5 000 vehicles used the Old Coast Road daily and 7 500 vehicles a day were using that road in the inner-suburban area around Dawesville. The member for Murray-Wellington will back me in saying that the study showed that 5 100 vehicles a day were using the South Western Highway. On top of those figures, 15 per cent of the vehicles using both roads were heavy traffic including buses, trucks and long vehicles. If these figures made the Peel deviation rank in the top four new road projects in Western Australia, what about the 1999 figures? We have been told the situation does not warrant action being taken until 2010. However, what is happening in the area now? We should not be looking at the 1997 figures but should obtain current figures.

The largest country electorates in Western Australia are Vasse, Mitchell and Dawesville - the coastal strip. All these electorates show a 30-plus per cent increase in enrolments since 1994 and are by far the fastest growing areas in Western Australia. Their common denominator is they are all fed by the Old Coast Road. The road is being choked not only by population but also tourism and the increased heavy transport needed to service the area. Main Roads has done its job and put lights in Gordon Road and Peelwood Parade to enable the traffic to flow. Two more sets of traffic lights are planned for the Mandurah area in Leslie Street and Murdoch Drive.

To stop the choke, the traffic will be stopped and it will be broken up. However, the traffic moves out of Mandurah and onto Old Coast Road around White Hill and that is where the accidents occur. It is like a horse boxed in at the rails; it is backed off the boards; the jockey waits to get out; all the money is on the horse; and suddenly he sees the opening and he goes for the line. That is what the cars are doing on Old Coast Road and there are accidents galore, particularly at Easter time.

Tourism has taken off in the south west. More cars, caravans and large and small buses are travelling south than ever before in the history of Western Australia. The tree walk at Walpole has been visited by 500 000 people since its inception and the surf championship and wineries at Margaret River are a big attraction. Recently, the Australian tourism award went to the Beachlands Holiday Park in Busselton. Most of the increased traffic goes through Mandurah. The coastal section from the new bridge at Mandurah to White Hill, with its bends and single lanes, is very dangerous. The new suburbs that have been created around Mandurah on the coastal strip are making it more dangerous. Erskine has gone from one subdivision to three subdivisions and so, too, has Halls Head. There is also a new subdivision at Cox Bay. It very dangerous for people to get their caravans and boats across the medium strip. Time does not allow me to give more examples, but I disagree with the figures that have been presented by Main Roads. They were from 1997 not 1999 and the minister's decision to delay the Peel deviation until 2010 is not correct. I ask Main Roads to do an immediate update on the 1999-2000 traffic figures on Old Coast Road and the South Western Highway.

MR OMODEI (Warren-Blackwood - Minister for Local Government) [9.12 am]: I thank the member for Dawesville for his comments and they will be raised with the minister as soon as possible. I, too, use that route when travelling to my electorate of Warren-Blackwood. If it were compared to Gloucester Park, which will be a muddy track tonight, it would be a long trip. I will give members a bit of history. The route between Pinjarra Road and Lake Clifton has been selected for the Peel deviation and it will be protected to ensure that the road can be built at the appropriate time with minimum impact on the land users. Recently, Main Roads undertook a study to determine the most appropriate timing for the construction of the Peel deviation. Based on the current predicted traffic growth, the study concluded that the Peel deviation may not be needed until 2010, a matter that the member for Dawesville disputes. With the rate of traffic growth in this area increasing at a faster rate than that in other areas, the actual growth rate will be critical to the timing of the work. Main

Roads will review the traffic growth and the proposed timing of that work annually. The study also highlighted the need to carry out a more detailed assessment of the traffic capacity of the existing coast route, particularly at the Mandurah Estuary bridge. When this work has been completed, the timing predictions will be reassessed.

Although the concerns of the member for Dawesville are appreciated, he would be aware that there has been a considerable injection of funds into the major routes in the south west region of the State; namely, the Perth-Bunbury highway and the South Western Highway since the coalition resumed government in 1993. More than \$70m is being spent dualing the Perth-Bunbury highway and, under Transform WA, \$315m is being spent improving the capacity of the Kwinana Freeway. The project includes removing traffic signals at the intersections along the freeway and building the next southern extension of Thomas Road at Kwinana to Safety Bay and connecting onto the Perth-Bunbury highway or Old Coast Road. This component will cost in excess of \$100m and will provide an uninterrupted journey from Mandurah to the Perth central business district. The budget estimate for the construction of the Peel deviation to a two-lane, single carriageway standard is about \$100m. The current programming of the project has been determined on a statewide priority basis to ensure that the best value for money is achieved from the limited road funds available. If there is a requirement to bring forward the project, it could be achieved only by the deferment of a number of other significant works across the State, or the identification of an alternative source of funds.

As members know, a number of roads in the south west need attention. The 39-kilometre Peel deviation does not lend itself to a staged construction. All of the work on the Peel deviation should be completed before it can carry any traffic. Depending on the timing of the Kwinana Freeway extension to Mandurah and the Serpentine deviation, it may also be necessary to construct a split-level interchange at the intersection of Pinjarra Road and the Bunbury highway. This interchange, which will cost an additional \$15m, will be required should construction of the Peel deviation precede the extension of the Kwinana Freeway. Currently, Main Roads is undertaking a traffic study to identify improvement work on the existing Bunbury highway and to develop and implement a program of relatively low-cost measures which will overcome localised capacity problems and maximise the use of the existing highway to its full capacity. Fund sources and priorities are also to be reassessed to identify funds for the construction of the Peel deviation to a two-lane, single-carriageway standard by 2010. If a source of funding is identified and traffic demands require an earlier construction, every effort will be made to advance the timing of this important project.

I know the member for Dawesville is a great proponent for his electorate and there is no doubt that some areas along that road are dangerous at times. I agree with the member that as soon as drivers get through the slow traffic, as he said, the horses bolt and that is when there is an increased number of accidents. Every week when I travel to and from my electorate, I see near misses, not only close to Mandurah, but also on Old Coast Road. That is a public relations exercise which should be undertaken by our road traffic authorities to ensure that we make our roads safer. I can only take the member for Dawesville's request to the minister and request that the Peel deviation be given priority. Obviously all of the studies are taking place, but it requires significant funds of \$100m and I am sure other members in this House would be concerned if their projects were delayed to give priority to the Peel deviation. All of those matters will be assessed annually. The Department of Transport will assess whether the transport movements are appropriate. There is no doubt that traffic comes to a standstill at Mandurah on long weekends. The Peel deviation is essential; it is just a question of the timing and the availability of funds.

POLICE NUMBERS IN ROCKINGHAM

Grievance

MR McGOWAN (Rockingham) [9.17 am]: I grieve to the Minister for Police on a matter about which I have also grieved to a former Minister for Police; that is, the staffing levels at the police station in my electorate of Rockingham. I grieve not out of politics, but simply because there is an extreme need for extra resources to be directed towards this station by the Government. Presently, the situation at the Rockingham Police Station is dire. The Government has announced it will construct a new police station in the Rockingham area and I am looking forward to its completion, hopefully this year. I also hope that when it is constructed, the Government will allocate additional resources to that station in the nature of extra officers. Yesterday I gave the minister details - probably more details than he would receive normally in relation to a grievance - of what I am after; that is, a substantial boost in the number of police officers at the station. This is a matter of grave concern to the people in my area. It has been raised not only by me in this place, but also by the Police Union which is very concerned about the state of the station, the stress levels that have been put on the police officers and the levels of unanswered or slowly answered crime in the Rockingham community. The matter has been raised by the Police Union and by senior police officers who are also concerned about the situation and who find it incredible when they hear the staffing numbers at that station, and it is constantly raised by members of the community.

I will set a scene for the minister. There are 70 000 people in the Rockingham police coverage area. Last year in Parliament the former Minister for Police answered that there were 39 sworn officers and three unsworn officers - a total of 42 officers. On another occasion last year he answered that the authorised strength of the station was actually 33 officers. Therefore we have between 33 and 42 officers - I understand that the figure goes up and down - and out of that figure we must take people who are on annual leave, long-service leave, maternity leave and so on. We have a very poorly resourced station.

Let me briefly compare Rockingham with other areas. Mandurah, which has 20 000 fewer people, has 74 police officers; Geraldton, which is less than half the size of Rockingham, has 97 police officers; Kalgoorlie, another area of much less than half the size of Rockingham, has 93 officers; Karratha, an area of about 8 000 people, has 41 officers; and Carnarvon, an area of about 6 000 people, has more than 30 officers. I understand that some of those areas are outside the metropolitan area, although Mandurah is pretty much metropolitan.

Mr Prince: Careful. I made a mistake by saying that once.

Mr McGOWAN: I do not have to worry about them being my party colleagues.

The situation is dire. People in my area are experiencing slow response times. I was pleased recently to take the officer in charge of the Rockingham Police Station to three areas in my community where people told him that when they ring up with concerns about people hanging around their houses at night, break-ins and so on, response times are sometimes four or five hours, perhaps the next day or the day after that, or perhaps there is no response. He had to address such concerns with those people. Like others, I do not blame the police in the station, but senior police and the Police Union - I do not think they say it about any other station - tell me that the station is dramatically underserved.

Last week the member for Midland presented to Parliament crime statistics which showed that there is a substantial crime problem in Perth and in all urban regional centres such as Midland, Fremantle, Joondalup, and Rockingham. Rockingham is a regional centre with a high population density and considerable commercial activity, yet in other areas there seems to be a considerable effort to address crime problems. I ask the minister for a substantial beefing-up of the Rockingham station. When the new one is built I would like it to have at least another 20 to 25 additional officers to give it a sense of parity with the Mandurah station, which deals with far fewer people and is in a similar geographic area. That would give people in the area the sense that if they ring the police there will be a quick response time or a reasonably quick response time. As there are more than 4 000 police in the State, that would not be a considerable imposition, particularly because the station is desperately understaffed at the moment. I have mentioned other stations that have more officers. In fact yesterday the member for Midland told me that she had never heard of a station being so understaffed with officers. This morning it took me an hour and a half to get to the city. Rockingham is the most distant part of the Perth metropolitan area. I hope that the minister will address the staffing matter. Rockingham Police Station closes at night and it desperately needs more staff. If the minister does something about staffing he will assist law and order in Rockingham.

MR PRINCE (Albany - Minister for Police) [9.24 am]: I thank the member for Rockingham for giving me some notice and details of his grievance. I shall make a couple of general points before I give a detailed response. The member for Rockingham must understand that no Minister for Police in contemporary times - that is, the past 50 years - has had the ability to tell the police how many officers to put where. Nobody has had that power, either as a matter of law or as a matter of convention. The convention is that Ministers for Police, whether or not they are frustrated by it, have no direct control or even power to direct the police what to do in the staffing instances that the member raised. That matter is solely within the purview of the Commissioner of Police both by law and by convention. Perhaps that matter is worth debate when we have more time. I simply make the point that that is the situation. I have not the power to tell the police to put more police officers into Rockingham.

Another point that the member for Rockingham must understand is that Rockingham is a subdistrict. That is probably historical. When it was a much smaller place it was a subdistrict of a region, and it still is a subdistrict of the Fremantle region. It has 49 police officers and four unsworn officers. It is supported from the Fremantle district support group, which has 68 officers, if at any time the officer in charge of Rockingham Police Station wants more police for a hot spot, an operation or whatever the case may be. In addition, in the past six weeks - the member for Rockingham might not be aware of this - three tactical investigation group detectives went to Rockingham detectives office.

Mr McGowan: How many have been lost?

Mr PRINCE: Not to my knowledge. The member may be correct; I am just saying not to my knowledge.

Response times can be of concern at times, especially when police attendance is required at the limits of the area that is the responsibility of the Rockingham subdistrict, for example in Secret Harbour. The current rostering structure allows adequate police coverage of the Rockingham area 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I do not know where the member gets the idea that the station is shut. An afternoon shift commissioned officer is now tasked with command and control. That is an innovation in the past few weeks. A commissioned officer is an inspector. Inspectors previously worked only in daylight hours. Now everywhere throughout the metropolitan area, and Rockingham is no exception, an inspector is in charge on the afternoon shift, which runs until midnight. An inspector is in charge of the Fremantle district each afternoon and evening. That officer has resources at his disposal that can be identified for Rockingham or indeed any other subdistrict of Fremantle. Fremantle district support group officers regularly patrol the Rockingham subdistrict on general patrol duties. There is also support from Traffic and Operations, which at the moment is conducting Operation Safe Drive everywhere in the metropolitan area, including in Rockingham on a rotational one-week basis.

The point about Rockingham crime statistics is that reported crime has decreased since 1996, despite 6 600 people moving to the area. That means that Delta is working, that we are apprehending more people and that crime rates are beginning to trend down. That is a fact. Intelligence-based information, including information from local residents, indicates that the socioeconomic circumstances of the area lead to high unemployment, especially among young people. As we all know, that tends to lead to antisocial behaviour, particularly when young males congregate in groups. They can become unruly and cause concern in the community, and the police respond. Strategies and plans have been implemented to combat that, with local resources, district resources and the mounted police. Damage, graffiti and loitering by groups, particularly around Rockingham city centre, is of major concern to the community, and I can understand that. That matter is being targeted at the moment, but crime levels continue to reduce in the subdistrict. Indeed, that is also the case in the bordering subdistrict of Kwinana, which is staffed by 26 police officers and two unsworn officers. There is no restriction on boundaries; police officers cross boundaries all the time. I mention in passing that since 1992, Kwinana subdistrict also has had a decreasing crime level but 4 500 more people.

Therefore, in Rockingham, although I do not doubt the perception of a high crime problem, the statistics are trending down which is good because it means the policing is more effective. The member for Rockingham and I know about the location of the community police and crime prevention officer at Rockingham Police Station because we have had a number of debates about it. That officer is actively recruiting people into Neighbourhood Watch and Safer WA and I am sure in the long term that will provide a great deal of benefit. We are also looking through the property services part of the Police Service for land in Port Kennedy to establish a new police complex, probably in 2001-02, which will help the Rockingham community, as will the new police station when it is built.

Even if we could find more police officers - there are 4 698 sworn police officers in this State - to be able to send them to Rockingham would require more accommodation. The police station, which I have visited, cannot accommodate those officers who are there. It is in a deplorable state. The police station needs to be replaced, and it will be. Until we are able to build a new police station, it will not be possible to put more police in there.

Mr McGowan: You are building it now, are you?

Mr PRINCE: Yes, that is under way.

Mr McGowan: It should be built within a few months.

Mr PRINCE: Until the new police station is built we will not be able to consider putting more police officers in there. Two transportable units were on site and so on for the task force that was run down there in relation to the death of a young boy, because that accommodation was needed. That is not a reasonable solution for a permanent on-site presence. I have listened to and take to heart what the member for Rockingham said. I will pass that on and do what I can to ensure the matter is addressed. The information that I have given him has come from the Fremantle district office which is in command of the Rockingham subdistrict. This matter should be reviewed in future because it may be inappropriate for Rockingham with its size to continue as a subdistrict. However, that is a matter that I will raise with the police executive.

WESTERN POWER - EMERGENCY TELEPHONE SYSTEM

Grievance

DR TURNBULL (Collie) [9.35 am]: My grievance is directed to the minister with responsibility for energy supplies in Western Australia. I thank the minister very much for accepting the grievance that I am about to present.

My grievance is pertinent to every member of Parliament here today and to all people in Western Australia. As we know, in 1996 the Government commenced the installation of a centralised call system whereby a 13 1351 phone number was used for the entry of all calls to officers of Western Power. Since that time there have been many complaints about the difficulties of customers coping with this system. During the years, I have sent a great deal of correspondence to Western Power about the extreme inadequacy of the system in dealing with customers' calls.

In 1996 I received a long and detailed letter of reply from Mr Tunnicliffe, the south west manager, explaining how the system would work and asking me to wait for it to be in order. In 1997 I received another good and detailed letter from the minister saying that the problems were being ironed out and the system would work. In 1998 I received a letter from Mr Lilywhite. Again, I asked pertinent questions about response times and many other issues and, again, in reply, Mr Lilywhite described exactly how the system was supposed to work and said that Western Power was working on trying to ensure that the system would be able to function in a better manner.

On 9 April this year a constituent of mine, Mr John Piavanini of Collie, wanted to make contact with Mr Buchanan of Western Power based in Bunbury. He rang the only number in any country phone book for contact with Western Power, 13 1351, and it told him 14 times that he had been placed in a queue. Eventually, he hung up. He then rang 013 and got the number for the head office in Perth. When he called that number, he spoke to Peter Winner who said that he was prepared to investigate why the centralised system was not functioning. Mr Winner rang him back and said there had been an emergency at Baldivis and all the lines were occupied.

I stress that this is not an isolated incident. I have rung 13 1351 and have had to wait five times in the queue before getting an answer. I also had the same problem last year when an irate member of the public rang me and said that he had not been able to get through and had hung on for half an hour. I rang the number and hung on for 25 minutes before it was eventually answered.

I ask the minister to consider an independent assessment of what is happening with this service. I have not received a letter in reply to the various letters I wrote in early April following the 9 April incident, but I had a phone call from a Western Power officer who said that the matter was being assessed internally. I do not think that was prompted by my letter; it had probably started anyway. However, an internal assessment is not good enough. This situation has been going on for more than three years and should be externally assessed. I have asked many of my colleagues, particularly country colleagues, about whether they and their constituents are having the same problems. They confirm that they are and in fact some of their stories are even more complex than stories of my constituents.

I want an external audit of the performance of the central reporting service to include issues such as the average response time during emergencies; the response time during weekends; the dispersal of public complaints to the appropriate officers within Western Power; the reply time that is stated by the customer service person who speaks to them, which is usually hours out; the need for a general office person in regional offices who could relieve officers of the huge pressure on them requiring replies to phone calls; and also to examine the inefficiencies in the central system for managing regional area complaints.

Mr Trenorden: People say that the callers know where the fault is and Western Power has no interest in finding that out.

Dr TURNBULL: Well, that is a comment. What other large organisations are doing in dealing with their customer complaints should also be analysed. Those big organisations have a clear customer service ethos. I would like the minister to call for an independent audit of the system.

MR BARNETT (Cottesloe - Minister for Energy) [9.38 am]: I appreciate the comments made by the member for Collie. I am conscious, particularly in times of storm damage, of the great pressure on the system and of the frustrations sometimes in getting through to the system, particularly in regional areas where there are relatively few numbers of people available to respond to calls even though they do not respond directly but to effect changes. However, the issue must be put in perspective. Western Power has 800 000 customers. Many large organisations, banks and the like, literally have large numbers of customers but they never have to deal with customers in a crisis situation like Western Power does as a utility. Therefore, those 800 000 customers may not call for years. When they do, they tend to call all at once because there is a storm or an electrical fault. The classic example of that was during the May 1994 storm when I recall about 100 000 phone calls were made in 24 hours. The exchange systems of Western Australia were incapable of handling that number of calls. Indeed, very few telephone exchanges in the world could handle that. Calls were diverted to the Sydney exchange to prevent mechanical and electrical failure in the Western Australian exchange system. It became a safety and security net for Telecom workers and the equipment as much as anything else. We must keep that in perspective.

I will not agree to a public inquiry; it would be a complete waste of money and it would not serve a purpose. However, I will undertake for the member for Collie, if she is interested, to have a detailed inspection of the system and briefing with Western Power so that she is fully informed of what is technically possible. As she said, Western Power introduced a central call system with two numbers which cover all the south west interconnected system. Its purpose is to ensure people in country locations are available to handle faults rather than telephone calls. One of the main problems has been that although it was possible to make a telephone call, the fault would not be repaired because the whole day was spent answering telephone calls rather than doing the work. The calls to those numbers operate between 7.00 am and 7.00 pm. In storm and emergency situations it is a 24-hour service.

Some changes in procedure are being made to the way the call system operates so that fault calls receive a high priority. If there is a queue of calls they will move up the queue. During periods of blackout or heavy storms, the volume of calls is very high. The other dilemma is caused by people using the repeat dialling system on their telephone. As a result, a relatively small number of people block the lines. If people resisted doing that there would be fewer problems.

The member for Collie made the point that only one Western Power head office number was available. That has been corrected and additional numbers will be added to the telephone directories. If people want to speak to an individual in Western Power, they will be able to do that through the exchange.

Dr Turnbull: That will be a huge improvement.

Mr BARNETT: I can appreciate the difficulty for a person wanting to speak to someone in Western Power about an issue and being caught up in the fault system. That is silly.

Mr Thomas: I rang Western Power last night after 5 o'clock on a business matter and discovered that the number was closed, although I was sure that people were in their offices.

Mr BARNETT: At a certain point, the office closes but there is provision for emergency calls.

Mr Thomas: I wanted to speak to a person who I am sure was in the office after five o'clock.

Mr BARNETT: That is unusual; for example, in my office the exchange system is open after hours for that reason.

The network operations control centre was thoroughly reviewed by Major-General Ken Taylor following the May 1995 storms. He made a number of recommendations. From advice I have received and my observations, the operations control centre is now working well. In recent storms the scheduling of calls and the feedback in particular of complaints to the field has been efficient. The field crews have been able to move in a logical way rather than going backwards and forwards from one fault to another. Strategic handling of blackout or storm damage situations has improved.

Western Power is aware of the telephone issue, particularly in country areas. People must be realistic about the demands put on Western Power, which has 800 000 customers and a limited number of field crews. I take on board the comments made by the member for Collie.

Mr Trenorden: The really hot complaint is that often people can tell crews precisely where is the break because they can see it, but the call system does not have the mechanism to take that information.

Mr BARNETT: I also take that on board. I will arrange for a briefing and tour of Western Power's control system for the member for Collie and any other country member who wants to be involved, which I am sure they will find interesting in its own right.

WATTLEUP

Grievance

MR THOMAS (Cockburn) [9.44 am]: My grievance is to the Minister for Planning, although he is not here. I understand that the Leader of the House will deal with my grievance. My grievance concerns the suburb of Wattleup, which is in my electorate. That suburb is one of the areas within the scope of the Fremantle Rockingham Industrial Area Regional Strategy

and it could be seriously affected by the outcome. I have raised the issue of FRIARS in this House on a number of occasions and referred particularly to the fact that a discussion paper was published two years ago that denoted the suburb of Wattleup as having a "future to be determined". As I have said on numerous occasions, it is unacceptable for people to be living in an area which, year after year, government reports have earmarked as being under question. In two and a half years we have progressed from a discussion paper to a draft report. That is good, but there is still a degree of uncertainty about the area's future and members of the community have questions which the Government and the minister should answer.

Those questions relate basically to what rates occupants will be paid if the Government purchases their properties should the area become industrial. Last Thursday evening I spoke at a public meeting in Wattleup. I am sure the people of Wattleup would support me in saying that they are entitled to fair compensation for their properties if the Government requires them to turn it into an industrial area.

The proposition is that the Government will purchase the homes in the townsite of Wattleup and it will be rezoned industrial and developed as an industrial area. That has arisen as a result of the need to find another use for some of the areas in Wattleup, other than the townsite, that are sterilised because they are within the Kwinana air shed. It should be appreciated that the area is a real and vibrant community; we are not talking only about numbers or colours on a map.

If decisions are to be made in this Parliament over the next couple of months that will radically affect Wattleup, members should visit the area. I am sure that they will be surprised. It is as near to a country town as one could get in the metropolitan area of Perth. It is bordered on three sides by rural land comprising mostly market gardens, some of which are still in operation, and on the fourth side by the Mt Brown portion of the Beeliar Regional Park. It has the ambience and some of the social characteristics of a country town. In recent months I have been doorknocking in the area and often found that people living in the townsite who formerly operated, and some who are still operating, market gardens and have moved into town. It has a very low crime rate and a very high community spirit.

Its primary school is treasured and valued by the community. People in the area who have spoken to me have indicated that they would prefer not to move because their children can walk to school in that very quiet area. A characteristic it shares with other areas of the Fremantle to Rockingham corridor is the higher than usual proportion of residents of southern European descent, notably Croatians and Italians. Many residents have moved there from neighbouring suburbs and as a result live close to parents and other relatives. It is an organic community distinct from and unusual in the metropolitan area and one which we should not lightly destroy.

The concern is that the people of Wattleup are being asked to make a decision now. They have been invited to make submissions to the Government indicating whether they wish to be bought out and the area made industrial, or whether the area should remain as it is. In making that choice, people need very clear information about the alternatives. If the proposition is that I buy your house, Mr Deputy Speaker, and it will be put to some other use, the obvious question you will ask is how much you will be paid. This is the area of ambiguity. I am looking to the minister for a clear answer. When the draft report was published, it was said that the land would be purchased under the normal provisions of fair market value; that is, what it is worth on the market today. I suggest to the House, and to the minister, in particular, that that is an injustice. This land has been artificially devalued as a result of the uncertainty that has prevailed for many years, the industry in the proximity and because it is in the Kwinana air shed.

The redevelopment proposal is presumably for the benefit of the State as a whole. This situation is not of the making of the people of Wattleup and it confers no benefit on them. They are entitled to compensation that would enable them to purchase like for like; that is, a similar house in a similar suburb within the area. That may mean they receive thousands of dollars more than would otherwise be the case. I also believe that they are entitled to a solatium; that is, compensation for the inconvenience of being moved. As I said, they are not the authors of this proposal and it confers no benefit upon them. In the same way that if a person's property is resumed they are entitled to a solatium, these people should be entitled to a solatium if the area is developed as an industrial zone. Effectively they will be forced into a sale and as a consequence they are as entitled to a solatium as if their property were being resumed.

MR BARNETT (Cottesloe - Minister for Resources Development) [9.51 am]: I respond on behalf of the Minister for Planning. This issue also relates to my Resources Development portfolio responsibilities. The Kwinana industrial strip is critical to this State. Indeed, in a geographic sense, it is the most productive area of land in Western Australia.

The Fremantle Rockingham Industrial Area Regional Strategy report was released by the Minister for Planning in March this year and is available for public comment until June 1999, so there is still ample time in which to respond. The plan proposes a range of land use, transport and infrastructure requirements to cater for the future growth of the area, particularly the industrial area. The major focus of the FRIARS report is the buffer area around Kwinana, and a number of options are floated in the report. Option four is the preferred option. It proposes the establishment of 900 hectares of general industry and 100 hectares of additional heavy industry. There is and has been comprehensive consultation on this project, and that will continue. The consultation currently under way includes a shopfront at Wattleup, to which the member referred, and a resource officer is working directly with the community. A series of briefings will be conducted with the community and interest groups. Property advice has been provided through the Ministry for Planning and brochures have been distributed. A series of public meetings is also being conducted, and I believe the member attended one last night.

Mr Thomas: It was last week.

Mr BARNETT: The Government recognises the significant issues affecting people in that area. The member has concentrated on the impact on Wattleup property values. The Wattleup town site is currently zoned urban in the metropolitan region scheme. Hope Valley and the other areas are zoned rural. This is a long-term strategic plan; it relates

to a 20 to 30-year process of change around Kwinana. In that context - although the member did not make the comment - people will not be forced out of their homes. We are not talking about instant change; it is a very gradual change and we are trying to give these people a sense of certainty.

When property is acquired, it will be acquired at the unaffected market price. There might be an issue about what happens to market prices as a result of planning studies such as this. The properties are not being resumed, but negotiations are taking place with property owners.

Mr Thomas: At the public meeting at Wattleup last week it was indicated that if the town site becomes a small industrial estate it will be necessary to redesign the road network in that area. The officer from the Ministry of Planning said that it would be necessary to resume properties, for example, for roadworks. The others that are left will be like the cottage in Tydeman Road - the owners will be effectively forced out.

Mr BARNETT: A decision to resume could be made at some time, but it is not being made now. The Government, through the Ministry of Planning, is dealing with every property owner on a case-by-case basis. There is no great rush; there is plenty of time for it to be done properly. A number of people have indicated their desire to sell their land and six sales are currently being negotiated. Through my family I know of one group of people who are selling their property. Often elderly people choose to sell out.

The impact on property prices is difficult to disentangle. The point could be made that a report like this has a depressing effect on property prices, and that may well be the case. The Valuer General's advice is that property values were about \$85 000 in 1989. They fell sharply to \$70 000 in 1991, and they are currently estimated to be about \$84 000. Property values in the area have been stagnant or declining for some time.

Mr Thomas: They are not declining or stagnant just up the road in Spearwood or in Rockingham.

Mr BARNETT: The Valuer General advises that comparable properties have comparable prices in Hamilton Hill, Coolbellup, Spearwood, Kwinana and Rockingham. The Government is conscious of treating people fairly. In cases like this there will be no rush. The Ministry of Planning will deal on a case-by-case basis with people. I suspect that many people will gradually choose to move out of the area. They will not be forced out but, as they indicate that they wish to move, the ministry will be prepared to stand in the market and negotiate property sales progressively over several years. Because of planning changes or new roadworks, resumption processes may well be initiated. However, initially the consultation process is under way to try to make people feel secure and comfortable. The ministry will negotiate with individual property owners and that will take several years.

This is an issue that needed to be addressed, and the member agrees. It has been hanging around unresolved for 10 or 15 years. However, the matter is now being progressed. The Minister for Planning, the ministry and I will be interested in any cases in which individuals feel they have been unfairly treated. This affects a relatively small number of people - I cannot recall the exact number - and over three to five years most of them will come to some agreement. At the end of the day, it may be necessary to resume land when a commercial site is developed in the area. I thank the member for the grievance; it is obviously an important issue in his electorate. If he brings individual cases to the attention of the minister and the Government, we will try to deal with them appropriately and sympathetically.

Mr Thomas: What about the issue of solatium?

Mr BARNETT: That occurs if resumption takes place. We are not at that stage now. These are negotiated sales. When people come forward saying they want to resolve the issue and get on with their lives, the ministry will deal with them, and the process will continue. I do not think it is appropriate to address the issue of solatium now. The Government will watch market values, and if there is evidence that this has the effect of forcing down prices to the disadvantage of property owners, that will be addressed. It is a fair point of discussion. Market prices and negotiated prices need to be monitored continuously. I assure the member that the Government will be fair to those people.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Grievances noted.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND EXPENDITURE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report

MR TRENORDEN (Avon) [9.59 am]: I present the report of the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee on activities from March 1997 to February 1999, report No 41. I move -

That the report be printed.

I will say a few words on this matter because it is important. Other members should not have much to say about this because it is an activity report. However, I am pleased to present it to the House because it is important that committees report back and be accountable. The committee has been extremely active during this period and has tabled six reports and two discussion papers. Members may be unaware that for two years this committee has been the lead committee in Australasia. As part of the administrative process, it has been responsible for the communicative activity within Australasia, and this has taken the time and resources of the committee.

I refer to the six reports that the committee has tabled. Report No 35 was entitled "Report on Procedure for the Examination of Witnesses - Open and Reportable Hearings". That was an important process that the committee undertook to explain a number of circumstances which were existing at the time. Report No 36 was the "Report on the Western Australian Tourism Commission Sponsorship Agreement with Global Dance Foundation Inc". Report No 37 was the "Interim Report on the

Nature and Full Extent of State Support for the Iron and Steel (Mid West) Project", which was referred to the committee by this House. Report No 38 was the "Follow-Up Report on the Western Australian Tourism Commission Sponsorship Agreement with Global Dance Foundation Inc". Report No 39 was the "Follow-Up Report on Western Australian Government Financial Assistance to Industry", and report No 40 was the "Interim Report on the State Budget Estimates Information and Processes in the Legislative Assembly". Obviously, the committee has an ongoing interest in that matter, as would, I presume, every member in this House.

The committee tabled two discussion papers, one on telehealth in April 1998 and one on tele-education in June 1998, in relation to the committee's inquiry into government in an online environment.

The committee was also responsible for organising and hosting the 5th Biennial Conference of the Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees, which was an outstanding success. Although only five such conferences have been held, there might be some faint praise in the fact that the attendance at this conference was the best thus far. The committee received a great deal of correspondence from a number of people -

Mr Osborne interjected.

Mr TRENORDEN: I will use my imprest funds to get there, but I will be there.

Ms MacTiernan: We want the support of the Speaker.

Mr TRENORDEN: That is true. I will allow members to make their own decisions on that. The committee is currently considering issues in the following areas: Government in an online environment; funding and administration of community service obligations; the Year 2000 problem; and the Constitutional Centre of Western Australia. That is a sizeable workload for a committee with our resources. We are moving ahead with those matters.

Before concluding, I draw members' attention to appendix 2 of this report, which gives the meeting attendance figures of committee members, which are excellent. I see the member for Bunbury hastily looking at the list.

Ms MacTiernan: That is only because we have had to keep you honest.

Mr TRENORDEN: That could be true. However, whatever the reason, it is a good attendance record and it is a credit to the members of the committee. It is important that the committee receive support. It is a good, committed committee. It provides a good service to this Parliament and the State of Western Australia.

I draw attention to the staff of the committee, who do the hard work. The senior research officer is Andrew Young. The research officers are Amanda Millsom-May, Stefanie Dobro and, more importantly, Kirsten Robinson, who is on leave at the moment because she recently became a proud, radiant mother. One of the great things about politics is that people can also have a personal life. It was great to see Kirsten and David become proud parents.

Mr Osborne: It is also worthy of note that Andrew Young, the senior research officer, lies second only to the Speaker in the Parliament House football tipping competition.

Mr TRENORDEN: I understand that we have had an approach from persons unnamed to conduct an inquiry into that tipping competition. There is a question about why the Speaker is leading the list. That may be the subject of a forthcoming inquiry. It is strange that someone like Andrew Young, who is a Hawthorn supporter, can be near the top of the table. Finally, Patricia Roach does a great deal of secretarial work for the committee. The committee is functioning well. I commend the report to the House.

Question put and passed.

[See paper No 932.]

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Report

MR WIESE (Wagin) [10.06 am]: I present for tabling the thirty-ninth report of the Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation on the Taxi Amendment Regulations 1998. I move -

That the report be printed.

This is the thirty-ninth report presented to the Parliament by the Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation.

Ms MacTiernan: I think you are more hard working than the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr WIESE: Absolutely. That has never been in doubt.

The committee examined the Taxi Amendment Regulations 1998, which were brought to its attention by members of the industry. Several concerns in regard to these regulations were put before the committee by industry people, and they are detailed in the report. I hope members will read that rather than my spending time of the House going through them in detail. The committee, having heard the complaints and concerns of the industry, heard evidence from members of the taxi industry and, subsequent to that, from officers from the Department of Transport. As to the industry people who appeared before the committee, two of them were full-time taxi drivers, and one was a part-time taxi driver, who is now a practising lawyer who still drives taxis on the weekend.

The committee sought a written submission from Mr Faigen, one of the persons who appeared before the committee, asking

him to set out the drivers' concerns. We submitted those concerns to the Department of Transport. Officers from the department then appeared before us, and during the hearings they also submitted a written submission responding to the issues raised by the industry members. Those two quite substantial documents are appended to the report as annexures B and C. If members have an interest in these matters, by reading those annexures they will receive a good summary of the matters that were raised before the committee.

After hearing the evidence from the departmental officers and having considered the submissions from the industry people, the committee resolved not to recommend disallowance of the regulations. However, several matters were raised before the committee which are important and should be brought to the attention of the House. Members will find them quite interesting and maybe even surprising.

The first issue that the committee examined and reported on in some depth relates to infringement notices, which are being introduced to penalise fare evaders. The regulations provide for a \$1 000 fine or a \$100 infringement notice for a fare evader and also for the amount of the fare evaded to be added to the infringement notice. I have an idea that this is the first time that such an amount will be collected by way of an infringement notice as opposed to a matter going before the court. There is a provision in the regulations and in the Act for the amount evaded to be added to the infringement notice and to be then passed back to the driver so that the driver receives the fare that was evaded. The committee considered this regulation in some depth. We had some concerns about whether it was within power, but at the end of the day we agreed that the Act does allow for what was done to be done and that the regulation was within power and we could do nothing further with regard to that matter. The committee had a concern that regulation 9A did not appear to allow for the circumstance in which it might not be appropriate for the hirer to pay the fare, or part of the fare, because, for example, the driver had failed to take the shortest route to the required destination. The matter is still of concern, but we must report to the House that despite that concern, the regulation is within power and the Delegated Legislation Committee can do nothing further about that matter.

The second issue that was brought to the committee's attention was the way in which jobs are issued to taxi drivers through the taxi dispatch service. Under the current system, the Director General of Transport imposes on taxi dispatch services the condition that they cannot show on the taxi computers the destination. That is causing some problems. All of the drivers who were interviewed by the committee expressed concerns about that matter. The report gives the example of a taxi driver who has been booked for a specific job half an hour or three-quarters of an hour ahead and who needs to stay in the area of that job in order to be able to meet that booking. However, according to these regulations, he must take whatever job is given to him, which may be to go to the airport and back, which will take him an hour and a half, and which will mean that he will not be able to take that booking; yet if he refuses to take that job, the Transport Department will subject him to an immediate penalty of \$100. That taxi driver gave a very good example. He has a longstanding booking to take a lady to a dialysis unit three times a week. That unit runs to a very tight schedule, and he tries to get that lady there exactly on time for her appointment. However, in order for him to be able to pick up that lady on time, he may need to stop working an hour before that pre-arranged booking, because otherwise he may be given a job which will send him a long way from the area and he will not be able to keep that booking and if he refuses the booking he will be fined \$100. That is a severe problem for him and for taxi users, and it is also a severe problem for the industry. The department has said that it is looking at the problem and will continue to do so. However, the problem does not appear to have been resolved.

The department has indicated that it has the power to deal with the situation, and it is currently providing a concession whereby dispatchers are allowed to display the destination for a short period prior to the driver changeover times, because the same problem was arising when the taxi drivers were changing over. If a taxi driver was sent on a job that was an hour away, when he was due to change over to another driver in half an hour, and he refused to take that job, he would be subject to a fine. Therefore, the destination is now provided prior to changeover times. It is obvious that the board does have the ability to provide the destinations, and it is obvious also that a problem exists which must be addressed by the industry and the board working together.

Members will be interested to know that the third matter which came before the committee was that a person who makes a pre-arranged booking has no guarantee that a taxi will arrive at the requested time. One of the witnesses said that the problem was that if a pre-arranged booking were made in an outer area such as Armadale or Wanneroo, the job would be called only 15 minutes before it was due. The taxi driver would have no indication of a pre-arranged booking that a person might have made 24 hours previously until 15 minutes before that person was due to be picked up to go to the airport, for example. In effect, a pre-arranged booking is not treated differently from a booking that requests a taxi immediately. That must be of concern to all people who book taxis well in advance in order to keep an important appointment or catch a plane.

Mr Bloffwitch: In those cases, people should book with one of the larger firms, such as Swan Taxis, that cover the whole metropolitan area. If they used one of the smaller companies, what you are saying would be correct.

Mr WIESE: Anecdotal evidence was given to the committee that it does not matter which taxi company is used; a person who makes a booking may still not get a taxi. Committee members gave anecdotal evidence of people who had missed their planes because taxis they had booked 12 hours beforehand had failed to turn up. Members need to be aware of that matter, and the committee has brought that to the attention of the Minister for Transport as a matter that needs to be dealt with.

The fourth issue that the committee uncovered in the course of its hearings was that there appears to be a breakdown of communication between the department, the industry groups and the drivers. The report goes into a lot of detail about that matter and outlines some of the evidence that was taken by the committee with regard to that issue. We say to the House and to the minister that it is in the interests of the department, the industry and the general public that these lines of communication be repaired and this issue be addressed by everybody concerned.

The committee resolved not to recommend disallowance. The report details many of the issues that I have raised, and a few

others. The committee believes that pertinent issues which have strong implications for the industry arose out of this hearing, and we bring those issues to the attention of the House and the minister and hope they will be addressed quickly for the sake of the general public and all the people involved.

MS MacTIERNAN (Armadale) [10.19 am]: I am pleased that the committee conducted hearings on this matter, because a great problem exists in the taxi industry. However, I am disappointed that the committee did nothing more than note its concerns and make brave statements about the need to look more carefully at these issues. The taxi industry is in a state of crisis, and we need to act a little more pro-actively than is proposed in this report. I do not have any difficulty with the summation of the problem as outlined by the member for Wagin -

Mr Wiese: I realise that you are not a member of the committee, but are you aware that the terms of reference of the committee did not allow it to go into the areas that you are addressing? We have brought them to the attention of the House so that someone can deal with them.

Ms MacTIERNAN: The committee's terms of reference allow it to move for a disallowance of regulations.

Mr Wiese: Only if they are outside the power of the Act and infringing on people's rights. These regulations do not infringe the terms of reference that would allow committee members to move for disallowance.

Ms MacTIERNAN: I take the point and will not unduly criticise the member for Wagin's committee.

The ACTING SPEAKER: As the member for Armadale is not a member of the committee, under standing order 380 she will have to seek leave to make comments.

Ms MacTIERNAN: I seek leave to make a few brief comments.

[Leave granted.]

Ms MacTIERNAN: I thank members very much for that. I have not had an opportunity to see the report.

Mr Wiese: I point out that any member of the House who is not on the committee has the ability to move for the disallowance of any regulations. That is the area you should be addressing.

Ms MacTIERNAN: I appreciate that. I wanted particularly to make one comment and draw it to the attention of the member for Wagin and others on the committee. It relates to the evidence from the Taxi Industry Board. The evidence says that the industry used to have a taxi control board which consisted of people, the majority of whom were in the industry. That situation has changed and the industry now has the Taxi Industry Board which consists of people who do not drive taxis. It is difficult to make these people understand the position, because they are not out there and they do not understand what goes on. In many respects that is the essence of the problem. We have a very powerful group of players in the taxi industry, who are basically owners, some of whom may also in the past have been drivers, and if there are drivers, there are certainly owners. They are calling the shots. The vast majority of people in the industry are lease drivers. They certainly do not own the plates and in most cases do not own the cars. They represent about 80 per cent of the industry.

This Government is listening only to the owners and the investors. As a result taxi driving has become to a very large extent a job of last resort. From my discussions and surveys that I have carried out with taxi drivers, I have found that we have taxi drivers who are earning on average - if they are lucky - \$6 an hour. As a result taxi drivers are leaving the industry. Even the Government's own recent research has shown that people are frequently reporting problems of drivers not only having no knowledge of the geography of Perth but also having very little knowledge of English, and basically having difficulty in offering an acceptable level of service.

We also have very real problems with the taxi dispatch services. They are no longer serving the interests of the public or the taxi drivers; they are there to serve the interests of the fleet owners. The industry is in chaos. I must say that the Labor Government contributed to this with some of its decisions. The member for Geraldton is nodding his head. Although we made some mistakes, they have been more than compounded by the decisions made by this Government. I am glad that the member for Wagin has raised a number of the issues, but we need a very profound change in the industry to get a decent set of standards.

Question put and passed.

[See paper No 933.]

TRANSPORT CO-ORDINATION AMENDMENT BILL

Committee

Resumed from 4 May. The Deputy Chairman of Committees (Mrs Hodson-Thomas) in the Chair; Mr Omodei (Minister for Local Government) in charge of the Bill.

Progress was reported after clause 16 had been agreed to and clause 10 had been partly considered.

Postponed clause 10: Section 26 amended -

Mr OMODEI: I foreshadow that the Government will oppose this clause. To explain that, which I have done previously during the committee stage, the clause would empower the Department of Transport to require operators of charter bus services to comply with the proposed omnibus operator standards. The Government is of the view that this issue is initially best handled by the industry itself, and although in the future it may be necessary to have some government involvement,

at this time it is preferable if Transport assists industry in the development of voluntary standards. We have had extensive debate on this in the joint party room. As a result, the Government has decided to oppose the omnibus operating standard.

Ms MacTIERNAN: I am still struggling with this. I want to make sure that all of the members understand what is going on here because it is fascinating. The Government is opposing its own amendments. The Government has had the amendments on the Notice Paper for one year. I know that the minister really enjoys representing the minister in the other place in his portfolio.

Mr Omodei: It is a real challenge, particularly having you as opposition spokesperson.

Ms MacTIERNAN: He must defend some of the extraordinary developments that come under this portfolio. This is a fascinating issue. I want to take members through the course of events. The second reading debate on this Bill was held on Tuesday, 4 May.

Mr Bloffwitch: You are not about to quote from the unedited *Hansard*, are you?

Ms MacTIERNAN: No; I will merely use it as a note to refresh my memory. At that stage during the debate, I put to the Minister for Local Government that the Government's further amendments to the Bill involved the Minister for Transport rolling over on the question of school buses and that he was intending to grant an exemption from these new standards for school buses. The Minister for Local Government responded by saying that that was correct. We then had a discussion about school buses and why they were being exempt. If the member for Geraldton does not mind my checking the time, this was around 5.00 pm on Tuesday. This was completely in line with the discussions which I had the previous week with the Minister for Transport himself. However, by 6.50 pm the backbench had revolted. I was confronted by the minister's adviser. Being a cautious person, I thought I would double-check that we were still talking about amendments which would exclude school bus operators. The adviser informed me that the Government would completely abandon the whole essence of the Bill and that the regulations, the whole system for setting up standards for the bus industry, would be removed. We are talking about fiddling with not the edges, but the guts of this Bill: The proposal to establish safety and performance standards for the bus industry is to be abandoned. The provision and the entire scheme will be deleted, which is an extraordinary proposition.

Media statements by the previous Minister for Transport referred to the proposed scheme being crucial. Will the minister explain the timing of this change? Why was it only last week that the Minister for Transport was of view that only school buses were to be exempt from this regime?

Mr Osborne: A week is a long time in politics.

Ms MacTIERNAN: Why was it as late as 5.30 pm on Tuesday that the minister was of the view that only school buses were to be deleted? Why was the momentous decision made to completely abandon the entire program, which was five years in preparation and 10 minutes in abandonment? Will the minister clarify the course of events which led to this situation?

Mr OMODEI: With some trepidation I respond as I know I will incite the member for Armadale. The member for Bunbury made the point succinctly in his interjection that a week is a long time in politics. Many of us can identify with that statement. A decision was made to abandon the omnibus operators' standards. I find it very interesting that the member thinks that this industry does not have the capacity to regulate itself. The Government reached the view that the industry has such capacity.

Ms MacTiernan: When did you come to that view?

Mr OMODEI: It does not a matter when the view was reached. The clause will be removed from the Bill. The Government believes that charter bus services have the capacity to regulate themselves. The Government is prepared to assist the industry to produce standards. Is it not better to have industry regulate itself, rather than big, bad government imposing its will on industry all the time? It is self-explanatory. An in-depth discussion was held in the joint party room on this issue, and the Government made the decision to change the Bill. We sit in this place to make and change legislation. Members know that.

Ms MacTIERNAN: I note the embarrassment with which the Minister for Local Government is dealing with this issue, and the fact that he is not prepared to tell us when the decision was made. Evidently, it was some time between 5.30 pm and 7.00 pm on Tuesday. The minister said that it is evident that the Labor Party has a lack of faith in the industry as it demands that the standards be set. This legislation has been before the Parliament for a year, and the Government has said for the past year that regulation is needed.

Mr Omodei: We had Labor Party legislation in Parliament for eight years.

Ms MacTIERNAN: Okay. The matter should be regulated. For the past day, the Government has claimed that it is an insult to the industry to say it should be regulated. I return to the issue of industry involvement.

Mr Shave interjected.

Ms MacTIERNAN: I can tell my comrade with the red box that small business is not impressed by the minister. Apart from a group of snake oil salesman led by the Minister for Fair Trading in the Liberal Party, no-one is impressed.

The second reading speech and media statements which accompanied the intention to legislate refer in great depth to the involvement of the industry. I quote my good friend the Tammin Tiger regarding this set of regulations -

. . . has been developed in partnership with all sectors of the bus and coach industry and has the full support of major industry bodies.

Mr Omodei: "Major industry bodies" is an important point.

Ms MacTIERNAN: Interestingly, one of the people involved in the process was the president of the school bus association. We do not argue about school buses as it was agreed to give the backbench their heads regarding school buses. Let us not become bogged down on whether school buses should be included.

I refer to a little history, as the Minister for Local Government obviously has not been privy to the history of this Bill. It started six years ago when then Minister Pam Beggs called the industry groups together and said that something should be done to improve standards, as had been done elsewhere around Australia. The industry agreed. When the first conservative Minister for Transport came to office, he took up the work commenced by Minister Beggs and appointed Mr Pascoe to chair a committee. Things started to move at a much faster pace. The industry was pleased as the process was developing a set of standards of accreditation to ensure we had a safer, better maintained and more efficient private bus fleet in this State. Indeed, the then Minister for Transport took a very hands-on role on this matter and he met with industry groups five times to discuss the process. It was put to the minister that the issue would be opposed by certain rogue elements in the industry.

Several members interjected.

Ms MacTIERNAN: The snake oil salesmen represented here today are worried about this issue, but these points will be made, whether the leader of the pack likes it or not. It is an important issue.

Dr EDWARDS: This is an extremely important debate on an issue about which policy is being made on the run. I am interested to hear further from the member for Armadale.

Ms MacTIERNAN: The previous Minister for Transport was advised by the association representatives that probably 5 per cent of the industry would oppose this proposal. If it was to perform this work, the industry needed a commitment from the then minister that he was serious. The Minister for Transport said, "No problem. We are dead serious. We are determined to lift standards. We will do so." Therefore, the work continued. These regulations were three years in the drafting. An enormous amount of work was put in by not only the Department of Transport, but also the industry in order to produce a set of standards which were commercially realistic, provide real protections and would have support from the bulk of the industry.

A new Minister for Transport was appointed and the wheels started to fall off the wagon. First, a protest was made about school buses. At the end of day, the major industry groups were not happy about it, but it was generally accepted that school buses would not be included. No such discussions were undertaken on the abandonment of the entire scheme, which is what the Government has done. In the six-year period the Government has been in office it has said that it has acted in partnership with the industry. It has talked about the degree of cooperation that exists, and how it has worked with the industry to develop these regulations. Suddenly, after six years of work, over a tea break, the Government has abandoned the whole process without a single word to the industry just because some government backbenchers represent those cowboy elements of the industry who do not want to maintain decent standards or to keep maintenance records. The Government did not alert the bus and coach operators association and the industry with which it worked so closely for six years.

Mr Bloffwitch interjected.

Ms MacTIERNAN: The member for Geraldton can get up and name names. He can tell us which operators he represents.

Mr Shave interjected.

Ms MacTIERNAN: The Opposition has from the outset supported these regulations. We have never spoken against them. Every statement that the Opposition has made over the past year since the legislation was instituted was an expression of support. We have backed the Government on these standards. We now find that the Government has abandoned those people with whom it has been working. Will the minister explain why these groups that the Government has been in a partnership with for the past five years have been led down the garden path and the Government has changed the policy without having the decency to consult with them, or to make a telephone call to them to say, "Sorry guys, you know how you've spent six years on that, we reckon it is a crock now and we're not going to go down that path. We will take a totally different stand because the member for Geraldton and Barney Rubble and a few of the others have been talking to the road bus operators and they have decided that the interests of that rabble overwhelm the interest of the general public." The Government will not get away with this.

Mr Shave: These operators are donating to your political campaign.

Ms MacTIERNAN: The member for Alfred Cove would not understand anything other than a vested interest. It is a moral limitation of his.

Mr BRADSHAW: It is important that some defence is made of the Government's position. Some government members were probably a bit slow to realise the implications of this legislation when it was brought to the party room and then introduced into the Parliament. I take some of the blame for being slow and not picking up the tenor of the legislation. However, once I became aware of the implications I was totally opposed to the omnibus operator standards scheme.

The Government is going through a stage of trying to deregulate industries, yet here we are trying to regulate an industry. The Road Traffic Act sets out a standard for buses. I do not support the introduction of more red tape to add to the complications of trying to run a business. In a few years the member for Armadale will realise that we have done her a favour.

Ms MacTiernan: The member is doing the Opposition a favour, but not the general public.

Mr BRADSHAW: I will tell the member for Armadale why, if she will stop banging her gums and listen. If the Government takes on the role of star-rating buses, in three or four years, when the costs of star-rating goes through the roof the bus operators will be saying, "You mongrel government what are you doing putting up costs?" Hotels do not have a government star-rating. I do not know who does it, but it is not the Government. When I was in New Zealand on Commonwealth Parliamentary Association business I asked a coach driver who star-rated the buses there. He said that it was the industry association. I cannot for the life of me understand why the Government should be involved in star-rating buses. We do not need the Government to be involved, and it will lead to problems down the track when the Government says it wants cost recovery. The costs of the bureaucracy created within the Department of Transport to administer the star-rating will go through the roof. The bus drivers will say, "You mongrel member of Parliament, get this fixed."

Ms MacTiernan: What about the more important issues like maintenance standards and records in relation to fatigue management?

Mr BRADSHAW: This is similar to the business accreditation process, and I have some problems with that in certain areas. Business operators have to do a course on how to run a business. Most of these people have been in business for 20 or 30 years, so they do not need to learn how to run a business. Yet they must jump through hoops and pay \$300, \$500 or \$1 500 for a course so they can be accredited. I can tell members how the accreditation system for buses would operate. At a briefing given by the Department of Transport I asked about a bus operator in my electorate. He had operated a butcher shop for over 20 years, and developed the odd subdivision. However, because he does not read or write that well he said that if he did that course he would fail. The Department of Transport officer said he had the answer for that gentleman: His wife could do the course. I do not think that is a good idea.

Ms MacTiernan: She should be at home in the bloody kitchen!

Mr BRADSHAW: I think it is pathetic because he operates the buses, not his wife. However, the officer's solution was for his wife to do the test and get him through the system. It is not acceptable that we should have another layer of bureaucracy to administer another system which will bring more red tape and more hindrances to people trying to get on with their businesses. I do not support that, even though withdrawing the omnibus operator standards from the legislation will embarrass the Government. The member for Armadale claims that the work done in the past five years is wasted. That is not true. If the industry is so keen it can put the scheme in place.

Ms MacTiernan: The good operators are already doing it. This is to bring into line the standards of those people who are not operating at a safe level.

Mr Bradshaw: If they are not operating at a safe level they are operating illegally under the Road Traffic Act.

Ms MacTIERNAN: Will the minister explain why no steps were taken by the Government either to consult with the bus and coach operators association and other industry groups about this proposed abandonment of a scheme that had been six years in the making, or even if they were not going to consult why the Government did not have the courtesy to inform the players that it had a complete change of heart in the matter?

Mr OMODEI: Those actions will be taken.

Ms MacTIERNAN: This is an interesting concept. The minister is saying that the Government will consult after he has abandoned the scheme.

Mr Omodei: We will consult and deliver the decisions the Government has made in relation to this issue.

Ms MacTIERNAN: Did the Government not consider it appropriate to consider those groups before it made its final decision?

Mr Omodei: Several members had contact with various operators.

Ms MacTIERNAN: But not with the association groups -

Mr Omodei: I do not know whether this is appropriate. The Government has made a decision to remove the omnibus operators' standards and has said it would assist them in setting those standards, should they wish to self-regulate. That decision has been made and on three occasions during the debate I have explained the reasons for that. How many more times does the member want me to do it?

Ms MacTIERNAN: I want the minister to go on record. He has admitted, and even the member for Murray-Wellington had the good sense to recognise, that this amounts to an embarrassment for the Government.

Mr Omodei: I did not say it was an embarrassment to the Government. The member for Murray-Wellington did not either.

Ms MacTIERNAN: That was certainly my interpretation of his comment. I would like the minister to give some insight into the timing issues surrounding this.

Mr Omodei: I will sit here, and this is the last comment I will make on this clause.

Ms MacTIERNAN: Perhaps the Committee will divide on this. I want to go over this point again to make sure that people understand what has happened. For six years the Government has been in active dialogue with the bus and coach association, which has worked hard to develop this set of standards.

Mr Omodei: This is fast approaching tedious repetition.

Ms MacTIERNAN: It is not fast approaching tedious repetition. Important questions have not been answered. There is the major question of when the decision was made to completely abandon this legislation. It is appalling that the minister has not been prepared to be honest about what went on. For the sake of the record, I want to indicate which members oppose this. When there is a major bus crash and there are bodies all over the road, and people want to know who is accountable, there should be some indication of the members who appeared to have taken an active role.

Mr Osborne: Which bus crash?

Ms MacTIERNAN: When there is a bus crash because one of the buses has not been properly maintained and no fatigue management system has been in place.

Mr Osborne: It has not happened yet?

Ms MacTIERNAN: It has not happened since the Government abandoned the legislation at 5.50 pm on Tuesday. The members for Wagin, Wanneroo, Vasse and Murray-Wellington should be mentioned in dispatches, as should the member for Geraldton. I shall be interested to hear his comments because he promised earlier that he would name the operators who did not subscribe to these standards. I know the member for Swan Hills has been active in getting these standards changed. The players involved are now on the record.

I do not often give praise to the former Minister for Transport but at least he had guts and was prepared to stand up to these people. The current Minister for Transport has gone to water on the basis of some backbench revolt.

Mr Brown: The backbench is revolting again.

Ms MacTIERNAN: It is very revolting. When there are bodies all over the road, we shall know who is responsible.

Mr BROWN: During the debate, I have been happily listening in my room to the eloquence of the member for Armadale. I then heard the minister indicate that he wished to forfeit his pay for the month because he will not do his job. The Liberal Party believes that if people do not do their job, they should not be paid. The minister should forfeit his pay because his job is to answer questions, and not to sit in this Chamber like a dummy. If he were a worker, he would be sacked. The minister should have some guts, stand up and answer the questions.

Mr Shave interjected.

Mr BROWN: That is the belief of the Liberals. We know that the Minister for Fair Trading is a right-wing Attila the Hun. The Minister for Local Government should get to his feet and show he has some mettle and believes in something.

Mr Omodei: I have answered the question three times.

Mr BROWN: The minister has not answered the question; he has been ducking and weaving, fighting from every possible quarter. He is like a bank robber who hides in every corner from the police. I understand that this is difficult and that it is not the minister's portfolio. I understand that he has had extra responsibility cast on him for six years by someone who attacked the policy issues of this Government with the back end of an axe. There is now another Minister for Transport. I understand that it is difficult but when a decision is made in Cabinet, the minister should at least be able to say that it is a good decision and explain the reasons for it.

Mr Omodei: I have done that three times.

Mr BROWN: The minister has not. I have been listening very acutely and I heard the minister say that it was his desire to sit down and remain mute. It is a very interesting concept; if there is no work there should be no pay.

Mr Omodei: Read the *Hansard* tomorrow and you might be enlightened.

Mr BROWN: When ministers are not prepared to answer the arguments put forward and they remain mute, it indicates that they do not have an argument and that they are conceding the point.

Mr Shave: Read the *Hansard*.

Mr BROWN: If I did read the *Hansard* on this issue, I would be four pages ahead of what the Minister for Fair Trading has read in the past six months. He can be compared with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Justice who yesterday said that she had not read a major report dealing with the Ministry of Justice, even though she holds that position. We know that the Minister for Fair Trading uses the big reports prepared by the Ministry of Fair Trading as doorstops. He thinks that is their purpose! He is asked questions in this place, and the next publication he reads will be the first. I hope his department is producing reports in pictures or in braille for him.

Mr Shave: Stop arguing like a rabbit.

Mr BROWN: I note that when the Minister for Fair Trading interjects, it is not to say that he has read the reports. He still has not read them because he is still getting to them. Those reports are three years old and he has not indicated that he has read them. The Minister for Local Government is a bit more competent. On a scale of one to 10, he at least scores around five. It is hard to find anyone who would score eight or nine. The Minister for Fair Trading is still trying to get on the scale. He is dragging the whole lot down.

The Minister for Local Government should do his job. He has an obligation to stand and answer questions, and to the extent that he does not, he is shirking his job.

Ms MacTIERNAN: The comments made by the member for Bassendean were very apposite. Some simple issues have not been answered by the minister. We want to know when the Government decided to abandon this matter. It is crucial.

Mr Omodei: Crucial to what?

Ms MacTIERNAN: It is crucial because the minister is telling us the Government made a considered judgment. He is on the *Hansard* record as saying at about 5.50 pm that he would exclude only the bus operators. By 6.50 pm - one hour later - he had abandoned the scheme that was six years in the making. The Opposition and the industry can ask, quite properly, what went on in that hour that changed the position. The industry can also ask why it was not consulted, given that after six years of a self-proclaimed partnership by this Government, this scheme was abandoned. The minister has neither answered those two issues nor explained when this U-turn was made and why the Opposition and, more importantly, the industry with which he was working were not told.

Mr Omodei: It is not relevant to the Bill. The Bill is being amended. Why does the member not allow us to get on with amending the Bill? I have told her that I have said all I am going to say on this issue. This is the second time I have said that.

Ms MacTIERNAN: It is not true to say that this is not relevant, because the timing of the decision making is relevant to the quality of it. I understand the minister is embarrassed by it. We deserve an answer in this Chamber as to what went on in that hour in which we saw six years' work flushed down the toilet. The minister is gazing at his navel.

Mr Riebeling: We have seen that for years!

Mr Omodei: Where am I looking now?

Ms MacTIERNAN: I should say, in the general direction of his navel. This point is highly relevant: The member for Murray-Wellington, in trying to provide an explanation for the Government's behaviour, talked about this being over-regulation - the minister should focus his mind on this because, as the member for Bassendean said, the minister is being paid \$150 000 a year so he should be doing a bit better than he has already - and said that we are moving down the road of deregulation everywhere else so it is wrong for us to be going to regulation. I ask the minister to explain that statement in light of what he told this place when he introduced the Bill -

The introduction of a standards scheme which embodies safety for passengers and the general public and reduces restrictive economic regulation, is consistent with National Competition Policy reforms. The public will further benefit from increased competition in service delivery which incorporates a range of innovative transport products.

I do not understand what is going on. We have the minister's statement that this system of accreditation will reduce restrictive economic regulation.

Mr Omodei: That was at about the same time as we accepted from you the amendments that we discussed in this place. What is so wrong about that? We are amending this legislation in committee so that when it is finished those areas will be taken out. This is fast approaching tedious repetition.

Point of Order

Mr OMODEI: We have been going on in this manner for the past three-quarters of an hour. I have explained three times in this place what the Government proposes to do with this clause, the next clause and clause 15.

Ms MacTiernan: You have not. This is absolutely outrageous.

Mr OMODEI: It is fast approaching tedious repetition.

Mr BROWN: The purpose of debate in committee, particularly under the standing orders as they are now with limitless five-minute segments available, is to tease out the various issues about the rationale behind the changes, not the changes that are being made. In her latest contribution, the member for Armadale raised important issues concerning national competition policy. These are significant issues relating to national competition policy for the State, and the minister has not answered those questions. This is not repetition. This is the first time in all of her remarks the member has made that point. The minister has not answered.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (Mr Barron-Sullivan): In response to the points of order made by the minister and the member for Bassendean, although I have been in the Chair for only five minutes, I have been listening to the debate for some time. I am of the opinion that there has been a considerable degree of repetition in the argument put forward. At this stage I will merely draw the attention of members specifically to Standing Order No 142 which deals with irrelevance or repetition. I ask members to bear in mind that we should be moving on to a new discussion in this matter. I will not invoke the provisions of Standing Order No 142, but I draw members' attention very strongly to those provisions.

Debate Resumed

Ms MacTIERNAN: I find that an extraordinary ruling.

Mr Bloffwitch: You can't canvass the ruling by the Deputy Chairman.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The member's time has expired on this occasion.

Ms MacTIERNAN: I just got up!

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The member's time has expired.

Mr BROWN: I am keen to hear the minister's view on the point raised by the member for Armadale concerning national competition policy. Whatever his limited knowledge about these matters, he should have a reasonable idea of national competition policy as it applies in this area, particularly as he said in the second reading speech that this process will conform to the national competition policy. It is not an unreasonable question to ask, given that it is the basis of the Bill. It is a little like what happened in a recent debate which involved the Minister for Police representing the Attorney General, when he told us that the Bill being debated at that time was based on a report that we could not have for most of the debate, and then we finally got it.

Mr Bloffwitch: You ended up getting it. Have you read all of it?

Mr BROWN: Yes; we have read the relevant aspects of it, and we have asked questions on it, unlike the member for Geraldton who flies by the seat of his pants and asks questions concerning things he knows nothing about.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I have also observed that there has been a lot of direct banter between members. I remind them to address all their remarks through the Chair and not to individual members.

Mr BROWN: Mr Deputy Chairman, given that you are addressing us in those strict ways, I hope the Chair will display even-handedness in those matters when other members interject. If there is to be a strict adherence to the rules in these matters - it is the prerogative of the Chairman to make that decision - I ask that when you are in the Chair and make that determination, it is applied even-handedly. The issue of the national competition policy has been raised. Surely the minister is at least somewhat competent to have a go at answering the question. He has made a bit of a hash of this so far, and that is probably why he does not want to answer the question from the member from Armadale. He has conceded that, having made all the decisions, the Government will now enter into negotiations with the industry. That is an interesting aspect of consultation. I can understand that, because he has made such a faux pas of it so far, he is very keen -

Mr Omodei: I said they will be advised. Of course, they will be advised of the decision.

If the minister checks *Hansard*, he will see that he said he will consult with the industry about his decision. I am not sure but I presume that means he will tell industry what his decision is.

Mr Omodei: That is exactly right.

Mr BROWN: That is an interesting view of consultation. It is probably the same interpretation of consultation which applies under the Native Title Act - "We will consult you" which means "We will tell you what the decision is and you will comply with it". It is an interesting notion and I am glad the minister has clarified the Government's view of consultation. However, leaving that matter to one side, I would have thought the minister would at least be able to come forward with some views on national competition policy as it relates to this matter. I understand that the minister is reluctant -

Mr Omodei: Are you asking me that question now?

Mr BROWN: Yes. Will the minister reply to it?

Mr Omodei: Indeed, I will.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (Mr Barron-Sullivan): Before the member for Armadale seeks the call, to demonstrate the fair handedness of the Chair I point out that the member for Armadale's time expired when she last spoke because when the minister was on his feet previously he was addressing a point of order and his time was not recorded. The member for Armadale's time had virtually expired. I assure members that the Chair is being very even-handed in its approach.

Ms MacTIERNAN: The minister has told the Chamber that the change has been made but he has not given any reasons for it.

Mr Omodei: I have given reasons.

Ms MacTIERNAN: By interjection. The minister has not been prepared to get to his feet and give any account. The only person who has had the guts to try to give some account of this bizarre decision has been the member for Murray-Wellington. What he put is all we have to go on. It is the closest thing members have to an explanation. He said that the fundamental problem for the Government is that it is philosophically committed to going down the route of deregulation and this scheme involves re-regulation. However, that runs contrary to what the minister told this House when he introduced the Bill. I will read the minister's words to the Chamber.

Mr Omodei: This will be about the third time.

Ms MacTIERNAN: No, it is the second time and I want to ensure the minister understands my point. He stated -

The introduction of a standard scheme which embodies safety for passengers and the general public and reduces restrictive economic regulation, is consistent with National Competition Policy . . .

Who is right? Was the minister right when he told the House that this basic system is an improvement on the present heavily regulated system or is the member for Murray-Wellington right when he says that it is an over-regulation and moving in the opposite direction? The Government cannot run those mutually inconsistent lines.

Mr OMODEI: The Government originally intended to introduce the omnibus operators' standards. At that stage they would not have contravened national competition policy. The Government has decided not to -

Ms MacTiernan: You said "reduces restrictive economic regulations".

Mr OMODEI: I cannot understand why the member for Armadale wants to keep revisiting the issue of omnibus operators' standards when the Government will not introduce them.

Ms MacTiernan: We are trying to find out why.

Mr OMODEI: I have given the Chamber reasons. The Government has changed its mind about the omnibus operators' standards and decided to remove them from the Bill. This will be the third or fourth time I have given the reason, which is that the Government believes the industry has the capacity to self-regulate and the Department of Transport will assist the industry in preparing those standards. I think that is the fourth time I have said that. How many more times do I have to tell members opposite?

Ms MacTiernan: You have not explained why for six years you thought they required regulation.

Mr OMODEI: The Government has changed its mind and believes the industry has the capacity to self-regulate. That is the answer and I have told members that five times.

Ms MacTIERNAN: The minister should understand that telling us the Government has changed its mind is not providing an explanation; that is simply stating the fact. We recognise that we are not achieving very much so I want to sum up what has happened. The member for Murray-Wellington had a shot; he was not as gutless as the others. I do not know where the member for Geraldton has gone. He previously promised to get up and name the operators who did not want this scheme but he has gone to water. At least the member for Murray-Wellington tried to give the Chamber some account. He focused on star ratings and I agree that they are probably not the most important element of this scheme. However, the important elements of the scheme are the provisions which make regulations relating to vehicle safety, which set standards for maintenance and for the keeping of records.

Mr Omodei: I have not asked you any questions but do you think the industry can self-regulate?

Ms MacTIERNAN: The majority of industry can self-regulate.

Mr Omodei: You little beauty.

Ms MacTIERNAN: No. The minister should get this right; I do not know how people like him can reach ministerial positions. Of course, a vast majority of people within the industry will do the right thing and will understand that in taking a long-term view of their business operations, they want proper fatigue management standards, proper maintenance standards and proper mechanisms for keeping maintenance records. I agree that we do not need rules for those people. However, the vast majority of the community will not cut grandma's throat and put her in a Sulo bin either; but we have rules about that because we know that a percentage of the community - just like a percentage of the bus operators - are not doing the right thing. The former Minister for Transport made a commitment to give statutory force to this code of conduct because he understood that. He understood that without a method of compulsion and enforcement, the rogue element which has the ear of the members for Murray-Wellington, Geraldton and Wanneroo will not comply. To say the bulk of the industry will do it anyway is to miss the point. This legislation is fundamentally directed at the element which will not do the job. It is not doing the job now; if it were, it would do it in any event and we would not need a code of conduct. The point of having a code of conduct and enshrining it in legislation is to ensure the other element of the industry does the job. I do not say this lightly but if one of those operators has an accident and people are injured and killed, the minister and his mob over there will be held responsible for it.

Mr OMODEI: That is nonsense and the member knows it. The member for Armadale has had her share of fun in this place today trying to embarrass the Government for changing its mind about the omnibus operator standards. The member for Armadale will know that vehicle safety is covered under the Road Traffic Act, that standards have been set for all vehicles and that under that Act, all bus operators must annually ensure they meet those standards. What is the member really on about?

Ms MacTIERNAN: Is the minister aware of the regime of vehicle checking which applies to school buses?

Mr Omodei: I have some knowledge.

Ms MacTIERNAN: Can the minister tell the Chamber what he understands it to be?

Mr Omodei interjected.

Ms MacTIERNAN: No, he cannot tell the Chamber what he understands of it. School buses are subject to random inspections twice a year. Why have we done that? It was because some years ago there was a major bus accident in which a great number of children were injured. We then recognised that the annual checks to which buses had previously been subjected - that is, when people rolled up and their buses were checked - were simply not satisfactory. Everyone in the industry knows that, particularly when we are dealing with plates, there are all sorts of ways of bodging a standard inspection, and that is why we introduced random inspections of school buses. We could have done the same in relation to other bus operators, but we decided not to do that; we decided to have a less restrictive form and to accredit bus operators. The Government has recognised a system in relation to school buses that is an acknowledgment that the existing regime under which other buses operate is in fact not a -

Mr Omodei: You are saying that you did not introduce it, but you want the Government to introduce it and now you are whingeing about it.

Ms MacTIERNAN: No. Hold on. It is a matter of progress. We introduced the new standards in relation to school buses, which involved random inspections. Time moves on. We then wanted to consider extending a proper safety standard to the rest of the bus industry. One thing we could have done was introduce the same random inspection system to private operators. Time moved on in terms of the way in which such issues were approached and it was thought, as the Government had thought until 5.50 pm on Tuesday, that a better way of approaching it was to set up accreditation standards so that people understood what was required of them and so that we had a system which was a mode of self-regulation but which had enforceability behind it.

The Government has moved from that. The minister's answer, which was provided to him, is simply not satisfactory. He has gone down that path because he recognises that the Road Traffic Act does not provide sufficient safety checks. He recognises that the single act of a maintenance inspection once a year or a check-over of a vehicle once a year is inadequate. That is why he spent six years of the industry's time and the Department of Transport's time coming up with his set of standards. His explanation simply does not wash. Basically, he has caved in to an element on his back bench that has the ear of the less scrupulous parts of the industry. I say again - it is not something that I say lightly - in this instance the minister knows that what he is doing is wrong and that it compromises safety, and if people are hurt he will have to wear the consequences.

Mr BRADSHAW: The way in which the member for Armadale is carrying on is ironic. Sure, we already have rules in place. We cannot speed and we cannot do all sorts of things, but an element still speeds, breaks and enters premises and holds up businesses.

Ms MacTiernan: Take their licences from them.

Mr BRADSHAW: When we catch them, yes. If we put in place the omnibus operators standards scheme, the good guys will still be good guys and the bad guys will still be bad guys.

Ms MacTiernan: There is no motivation for others to lift their standards.

Mr BRADSHAW: That is a load of rubbish. The fact is that it will not change matters. The member for Armadale says that when the next bus crash occurs and there is a body on the ground, we will take the blame for it. Why should I take the blame if somebody does not abide by the Road Traffic Act, which states that a bus must be up to standard? I do not believe that I or any other member should take the blame; it is up to the operator of a bus to make sure -

Ms MacTiernan: You are allowing them to get away with it. You know it is a problem.

Mr BRADSHAW: We are not allowing them to get away with it. There is an Act which states that they must have their buses up to a certain standard - just like the member's car or a motor bike or any other motor vehicle. It is interesting that she wants the provision for bus operators. Will she include car owners as well?

Ms MacTiernan: We are talking about vehicles -

Mr BRADSHAW: No, I am talking about cars. Cars can be just as defective as buses.

Mr Brown: What about hire vehicles?

Mr BRADSHAW: Does the member for Bassendean think that there are no hire cars?

Mr Brown: Are there obligations on them?

Mr BRADSHAW: Of course there are. The Road Traffic Act states that hire cars should be up to a certain standard. Does the member for Armadale say that every car owner who must do an accreditation course must tick a little box to check the tyres, oil and so on? She is living in cloud-cuckoo-land if she wants to introduce that measure. As I said a while ago, I am doing her a favour by helping not to bring in the measure, because in a few years -

Ms MacTiernan: You are doing us a favour.

Mr BRADSHAW: Good. People will not run to the member for Armadale and ask, "Why is the Government putting up our costs, even though you say that the Road Transport Association is pushing for it?"

Ms MacTiernan: The Bus and Coach Association.

Mr BRADSHAW: I am led to believe that it is the Road Transport Association, which represents those people, yes. Just because we have rules and regulations in place, it does not mean that people will abide by them.

Mr McGowan: Do you think we should have gun laws?

Mr BRADSHAW: Of course I do.

Mr McGowan: What are you trying to say?

Mr BRADSHAW: I am saying that we have gun laws in place and I support -

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (Mr Barron-Sullivan): Order! I remind members that there are requirements in relation to relevance. We are discussing clause 10.

Mr BRADSHAW: By the way, gun laws are a different issue. Just because rules and regulations are in place, it does not mean that people will abide by them. As with most laws, they impede the good people in our society and the ones who do not want to abide by the laws will still not abide by them. The legislation is not satisfactory and we should oppose it.

Ms MacTIERNAN: Attending a parliamentary session, particularly when backbench members opposite speak, would be an interesting exercise for students of logic. We have seen yet another completely contradictory, mutually exclusive set of propositions advanced by the member for Murray-Wellington and by the minister. Let me point out to members who were not paying attention that we have had two propositions. The first proposition was that we are abandoning the standards because they are not needed because the industry is doing it anyhow and the industry will self-regulate; therefore, we do not need the standards because this will happen anyhow and people will perform up to the required level through the notion of self-regulation. Having advanced that proposition, the member for Murray-Wellington advanced a second proposition, with the support of the minister: If we imposed the standards we would see a massive cost blowout. The obvious conclusion that we need to draw from that is that the member for Murray-Wellington acknowledges that those people, under a regime of self-regulation, will not adopt that set of standards. He says that if they adopt that set of standards there will be a cost blowout, therefore, clearly they will not comply with those standards in a self-regulatory environment.

I will not labour the point; I am sure that it washes over the heads of a few of our comrades on the other side. The reason that the Government spent so much of its time and the industry's money and time on preparing the regime over the past six years is that it recognises the shortcomings of the provisions in the Road Traffic Act. It recognised that although the majority of players in the field are doing the right thing and are operating at a safe standard, there is an element which is performing in a less than satisfactory manner that is actually compromising the safety of the general public that uses such vehicles. The minister has not provided a logically consistent, satisfactory account as to why, after having believed that for six years, in the past day he now no longer believes it - that is, why, suddenly after six years of saying that self-regulation is not good enough, in the past day he now says that self-regulation is the answer. Over that time members opposite have said that public safety demands this; now they are saying that it does not demand it. It is a woeful performance by the Government. If an accident occurs involving a driver who is operating below those standards, the Government must bear the consequences.

Mr BROWN: I direct the minister's attention and that of the member for Murray-Wellington to comments made by the former Director of Public Prosecutions. I asked a question of the Attorney General the response to which places the DPP on the public record as saying, not that self-regulation is worthless, but that it is a much lower bar than regulation in seeking uniformity. Should there be uniformity? In my capacity representing the Opposition in small business, many legitimate small business people - not many from the bus and coach industry but there are probably analogies to be drawn - have complained bitterly that some of their competitors are not following the rules or doing the right thing and keeping their prices lower. They say to me that they cannot compete; however, they would be happy to compete with anyone complying with the rules because they have a good product and run good businesses.

Mr Bloffwitch: They should try the motor industry if they think their business is tough.

Mr BROWN: I am referring to the motor industry, particularly the dismantler industry. As the member for Geraldton knows, legitimate firms in the dismantler industry are saying to me that certain rules and regulations in the industry are not being complied with and agencies are reticent to enforce compliance. As a result, businesses are at risk.

At least an opportunity is available to force compliance because regulations are in place. I agree with the member for Murray-Wellington that a law is not worth anything if it is not enforced. We can pass mountains of laws as quickly as we can blink in this place, but if they are not enforced, they are not worth the paper on which they are written.

Mr Prince: You should use the expression "complying with" rather than "enforcing". Most laws are complied with because people want to, but there is an enforcement element for those who do not comply.

Mr BROWN: I agree with the Minister for Police about that. However, as he knows, most people are happy to comply to the degree that others also comply. If people keep travelling 20 or 30 kilometres an hour faster than the speed limit for months and months - once or twice is not a problem - and nothing is done about it, even the most law-abiding person will feel like a bit of a dill and follow the trend, irrespective of what is the limit. However, I acknowledge the need not to overregulate. In the past, Governments of all political persuasions have not kept a keen eye on old regulations which unnecessarily cost money as a result of improvements in technologies, systems or products. It is important to constantly review regulations to take into account such changes. Equally, in some situations, regulations must set the base, otherwise people trying to operate to the lowest common denominator can endanger people's lives.

We need look no further than at travel agencies and trust funds for examples. They were once voluntary; but they are not any more. In the past, people have said that their self-regulatory schemes were effective; that is, until someone took the money. Then, as the former DPP said, self-regulation was not worth anything.

Mr BRADSHAW: I reiterate that the Road Traffic Act requires that those buses must meet certain standards. It is a matter of law with which the owners or operators must comply. It is the same as owning standard motor vehicles, motorbikes, etc.

Ms MacTiernan: We have obviously not been able to penetrate.

Mr BRADSHAW: Members opposite certainly have not. They are talking illogical claptrap. Variations in standards apply to buses as they do to cars. Some buses have fancy seats and everything that opens and shuts. I do not know whether members have travelled on buses used to take young people on pub crawls for their twenty-first birthday celebrations, but they are fitted with rubber floor mats so that they can be hosed down following a pub crawl! At the other end of the scale tourist buses and coaches are fitted with more luxurious interiors. The mechanical safety of buses must meet the requirements of the Act irrespective of their interior.

Ms MacTiernan: We have explained this point.

Mr BRADSHAW: The member has not.

Ms MacTiernan: The only standard is a once-a-year vehicle check. You said it was not adequate because you supported changing the system in relation to school buses to two random checks a year.

Mr BRADSHAW: I am not sure that they are random checks.

Ms MacTiernan: You should check it out, because they are.

Mr BRADSHAW: I am under the impression that school bus operators are told when their buses are to be inspected.

Ms MacTiernan: Are you saying that there are crooks in the Department of Transport?

Mr BRADSHAW: I am not saying that; I am saying that to my knowledge the bus operators are told a week or so in advance that they are having checks on their buses.

Ms MacTiernan: I will be very interested to examine that. That may have to be referred to the Anti-Corruption Commission!

Mr BRADSHAW: It would be a bit over the top to go that far. I may be wrong, but I am certainly under the impression that owners receive prior advice about school bus inspections.

Mr Bloffwitch: That used to be the case, but I do not think it is now.

Mr BRADSHAW: It may not be the case, but I was under that impression. If the Opposition thinks that accreditation should be implemented for those buses, according to its logic the next step should be to do the same for all private cars in Western Australia. If the buses must operate under a more bureaucratic legal system, surely the same should apply to private car operators in Western Australia. I do not support that.

Ms MacTiernan: One is a public vehicle for hire that carries 30 paying passengers.

Mr BRADSHAW: The following is an example of why cars should meet the same requirements for road worthiness as buses: A bus was involved in an accident in I think America or Australia - I forget where it occurred - during the past 12 months.

Ms MacTiernan: This is a well-researched anecdote; are you sure it was not on the moon?

Mr BRADSHAW: It is something that I recall reading about. The bus ran off the edge of a bridge because a car had cut it off. The accident had nothing to do with the safety of the bus; it occurred because a car driver had behaved erratically. That had nothing to do with vehicle safety inspections; accidents occur as a result of circumstances other than road worthiness. Therefore, it is illogical to say that accidents will happen because we have introduced this legislation to bring more bureaucracy and red tape to the world. I still do not support it. I have not been convinced that we need it, and I will continue to oppose it.

Ms MacTIERNAN: We have addressed those comments that were made by the member for Murray-Wellington. It is an appalling standard of debate. The point that was made by the member for Bassendean is a profound one, and one on which I want the minister to comment. The essential point was that one of the problems of a self-regulating scheme in a deregulated environment is that it makes it difficult for those who want to comply. The behaviour of certain elements of the industry drag the whole industry down because obviously cost savings are made by taking short cuts. The less a bus is maintained, the cheaper it is. That enables those types of operators to drive their prices down, which in turn makes it difficult for those bus operators who want to do the right thing, who want to operate at a safe standard and who want to have vehicles that are safe, comfortable and properly maintained, to compete against those elements in the industry.

I ask the minister to do this Parliament the service of explaining how, in this deregulated environment in which we are expecting these operators to set their own standards, the crucial economic point that has been made by the member for Bassendean can be overcome.

Mr OMODEI: That is a good point. I have already said that in a situation in which the industry would self-regulate or create its own standards, the Department of Transport would be prepared to help people develop voluntary standards. As a result of that, I expect that there will be improvements in those standards should they be necessary. Even if the omnibus operator standards were introduced, they set a basic standard, and there would be various degrees within those standards. Obviously, there would be a basic level, just as there is a basic level now with the inspection of buses. There will always be degrees in the level of exclusiveness of vehicles. Some will be at the top of the range and some will be at the bottom of the range. That will always be the case, whether we have standards or the current situation.

Ms MacTIERNAN: There will always be a variety of compliance. However, in a situation in which an operator is consistently taking short cuts, not paying to properly maintain its buses and thereby being able to operate at a lower cost, a competitor can make a complaint to the Department of Transport. The department can then intervene and take steps to examine the degree to which the operator is complying with the standards. If there is no enforcement, no mechanism exists whereby those operators who are taking short cuts can be taken to task. That is the essential issue, and it is one that this regime will no longer address.

Mr OMODEI: Obviously, the Government has not agreed to the omnibus operator standards. In the current situation under the Road Traffic Act, if the standard is not being maintained, and a complaint is made and an inspection is carried out, the operator is brought to account and prosecuted.

Postponed clause put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (16)

Mr Brown
Mr Carpenter
Dr Edwards
Dr Gallop

Mr Grill
Mr Kobelke
Ms MacTiernan
Mr Marlborough

Mr McGowan
Ms McHale
Mr Riebeling
Mr Ripper

Mrs Roberts
Mr Thomas
Ms Warnock
Mr Cunningham (*Teller*)

Noes (29)

Mr Baker
Mr Barnett
Mr Bloffwitch
Mr Board
Mr Bradshaw
Dr Constable
Mrs Edwards
Dr Hames

Mrs Hodson-Thomas
Mr House
Mr Johnson
Mr Kierath
Mr Marshall
Mr Masters
Mr McNee

Mr Minson
Mr Nicholls
Mr Omodei
Mrs Parker
Mr Pendal
Mr Prince
Mr Shave

Mr Sweetman
Mr Trenorden
Mr Tubby
Dr Turnbull
Mrs van de Klashorst
Mr Wiese
Mr Osborne (*Teller*)

Pairs

Mr McGinty
Ms Anwyl
Mr Graham

Mr Cowan
Mr Court
Mr Day

Postponed clause thus negatived.

Postponed clause 11 put and negatived.

Postponed clause 15: Section 60 amended -

Mr OMODEI: I move -

Page 11, line 25 to page 12, line 4 - To delete the lines.

This amendment deals with the same issue and deletes clause 15(b). As I mentioned before, the reason for this is to remove the omnibus standards.

Amendment put and passed.

Postponed clause, as amended, put and passed.

Title put and passed.

Bill reported, with amendments.

JURIES AMENDMENT BILL

Recommittal

On motion by Mr Prince (Minister for Police), resolved -

That the Bill be recommitted for the further consideration of clauses 5, 8 and 9.

Committee

The Deputy Chairman of Committees (Mr Barron-Sullivan) in the Chair; Mr Prince (Minister for Police) in charge of the Bill.

Clause 5: Section 18 amended -

Mr PRINCE: By way of explanation, this is a slightly unusual process in which I am moving that we oppose amendments. As I understand it, when this Bill was introduced in the other place, it sought to remove from the Juries Act the ability of the Crown in a jury trial to stand aside jurors during the empanelment process and to reduce the number of peremptory challenges available either to the prosecution or defence. In that sense it was a package. The number of peremptory challenges would go down from eight and the stand-aside ability which the Crown has had for years would disappear. That was the original proposition in the original Bill. That was then amended in the other place, so that the stand-aside provisions remained out and the peremptory challenges went back to eight. That is the form in which the Bill has arrived here. I am moving to oppose those amendments. If we pass my amendments, the effect of the Bill will be to leave the Act as it is at present, unamended with regard to both stand aside and peremptory challenge; in other words, there would be no change.

I will go through that again to try to get it straight in my mind. The Juries Act at the moment permits eight peremptory challenges to the defence and prosecution. It also enables the Crown without challenging to stand aside during the empanelment process any juror who comes up. The original amendment in the other place sought to remove the ability of the Crown to stand aside and to reduce the number of peremptory challenges. The other place has amended that portion of the Bill so that the Crown can no longer stand aside and the number of peremptory challenges has been increased back to eight. The view of the Attorney is that the two go together and what we should do therefore is accept the Bill from the other place but change the amendments that it has made, so what we wind up with is what we have now with regard to stand asides

and peremptory challenges. I am speaking mostly to the members for Fremantle and Burrup because they understand the technicalities of what I am talking about.

Mr McGinty: Could you explain why? I understand technically what has happened but you have not explained the rationale for wanting to reinstate the stand-aside provisions.

Mr PRINCE: My view, speaking more as a former practising jury lawyer, is that stand aside is something that the Crown should never be able to do anyway, and I would like to see it abolished. In the course of preparing the amendments, the reduction of the peremptory challenges was sought basically to assist people like the sheriff who is with me in getting a jury panel and being able to get juries empanelled.

Mr Riebeling: It is exactly the opposite.

Mr PRINCE: One reduces the number of challenges and ends up with a panel that can be more easily handled. What was originally sought was the abolition of peremptory challenges. I was not in favour of that. We wound up with a package which says that one can reduce the number of peremptory challenges and one can get rid of stand asides. That is what came into the Chamber. The Attorney, having been unsuccessful in getting that through the other place, basically wants to go back to the status quo and then start again. That is really where we are at present. If the Chamber does not accept my proposition of going back to the status quo, we will be going backwards and forwards between the two Houses over this matter.

Mr McGINTY: The argument in favour of the changes to the stand-aside provisions and peremptory challenges being reduced or done away with was that not so many people were needed to assist in the efficient administration of the jury system in a court.

Mr Prince: That is right.

Mr McGINTY: It seems that the notion of stand asides is somewhat archaic and could easily be done away with, regardless of what we do with peremptory challenges. What justification is there for regarding this as a package because the two elements seem quite unrelated? The package would not be affected in any way if peremptory challenges were to be made by either the prosecution or the defence, if there is no capacity to stand aside, but it would assist in the efficient administration of the court. It seems that this is more of a dummy spit by the Attorney General who did not get his way and therefore said that we would not have anything and that he would take his bat and go home. I ask again, what is the justification for now seeking to reinstate the stand-aside provision? The minister has explained what is proposed to happen but he has not explained to me or the Chamber why it is justified.

Mr RIEBELING: If we adopt the minister's suggestion, there will be eight challenges.

Mr Prince: It depends whether there are multiple defendants. We would simply leave the law as it is, which is eight peremptory challenges to the defence, eight to the prosecution and the power to stand aside.

Mr RIEBELING: How many stand asides are there?

Mr Prince: There are an indefinite number. What happens is that one gets to the end of a jury panel and those who have been stood aside come back.

Mr RIEBELING: Yes. My problem with the system is the same as the minister's personal preference. The minister said that to leave stand asides in the Act would be easier for the sheriff. The problem I had with jury panels when I was involved in getting people onto them was that I had to try to get enough people available to allow for challenges, stand asides and the like to take place. Stand asides are really the prosecution saying that it does not like the look of someone for no particular reason and will keep them hanging there. A challenge is up-front, and no reasons are given. Why retain the stand-aside system? I could understand an argument from the Government that objections need to be increased to 10. However, that is not the Government's argument. In essence, the Government is saying that the number of objections that the prosecution will be given are not sufficient to enable the prosecution to select the jury of its preference. I cannot see in a jury system why the prosecution should be treated any differently from the defence. I cannot see why a prosecution counsel has the ability to stand more people aside than a defence counsel. Justice is not achieved by giving one side an advantage over another.

Stand aside has been in operation since the year dot, and I thought the amendment that was proposed was good. Although the Government has the numbers that will prove its argument is correct, for the sake of justice, I cannot see any rationale for giving the prosecution this advantage. The prosecution also has the advantage of the resources of the State to find out who has a criminal record or a parking ticket. It has more resources than the defence counsel. The minister was once one of those humble gentlemen. At the end of the day, the prosecution not only has the advantage of added resources but also extra challenges. That is unjust.

Mr PRINCE: It is somewhat difficult for me, because I agree with most of what the member for Burrup has said. I have long held the view that the Crown should not have the ability to stand aside jurors. The way in which prosecutors handle that ability varies from prosecutor to prosecutor. However, there are some good reasons for it. The prosecutor may be made aware by the police of matters that are in the hands of the Bureau of Criminal Intelligence; in other words, not convictions but simply information which, after all, is a fundamental tool in criminal investigations. That is more likely to be the case in a smaller town such as Karratha, Albany, Geraldton, Bunbury and so on than it will be in the metropolitan area where the pool is so much greater. The Crown would simply say, "Stand aside" and that is all. That person may come back but that will depend on how many jurors turn up. There is not only the peremptory challenge but also a challenge for cause. I have never heard a challenge for cause. I have challenged people such as the wife of the police superintendent of the district, the

immediate retired police superintendent and other people of that ilk when one would think as matter of course they would not be on a jury because of the perception of bias. For things of that nature there should be a right of challenge, peremptorily or for cause. I do not want to follow the American situation in which they spend days selecting a jury by challenge for cause. The right of peremptory challenge should remain, as does the number of challenges we can debate. The sheriff's problem is that if eight peremptory challenges are allowed, to form one jury of 12 for one defendant he must have available 28 people. Often there will be a number of defendants and the number of jurors required will blow out. The sheriff can wind up with 50, 60, or 80 people hanging around. He will not get all of them to come and some people will object to serving on a jury and so on. We should look at the way in which this is done, because of the logistics involved.

Mr Riebeling: The minister is arguing against the Bill.

Mr PRINCE: The logistics of getting that number of people to appear, and holding them is difficult. It is time consuming, costly and an imposition on people and their time. If we can improve the system we should. The Attorney General's view as stated in the second reading speech is that stand asides and peremptory challenges should be looked at together in the context of effective and efficient operations of the jury system. He said that merely taking one out does not change the burden on the public; it is burying one's head in the sand. He said that it was the Government's view that no change should be made in the area of stand asides without at the same time making adjustments to reduce the number of peremptory challenges.

That is a fair point. For example, if the government were to reduce the number of peremptory challenges say to six and leave the power of stand aside, the argument that the member for Burrup just raised about the poor old defence counsel would have even more weight. Consequently, we need to look at the two together, which is the point raised by the member for Fremantle. I seek to rebut the amendments that have come out of the Legislative Council, leave the law as it is, look at it again and hopefully come back with something that deals with both peremptory challenge and stand aside that the two Chambers of this Parliament are prepared to accept.

Mr RIEBELING: Surely if the minister believed what he is saying, the amendment would do that? Why not include that in the amendment?

Mr Prince: We must first talk to the Director of Public Prosecutions and the sheriff's office.

Mr RIEBELING: I agree with the minister's argument that we should only have the challenges in place.

Mr Prince: That is my personal view.

Mr RIEBELING: We are here to put in place legislation. The majority of people with experience in the court system would say that the old stand-aside system has had its day. The Opposition agrees with most of this Bill. Earlier this week we debated the Bill for only 10 minutes because we agreed with it.

Mr Prince: I was not here then. If I had been here we would not have this problem. The Minister for Primary Industry is not a lawyer, and to give him his due he was doing his best to get the Bill through.

Mr RIEBELING: The minister got the Bill through very quickly. The only difference of opinion I had in the debate was that the age limit of 70 should be raised. Daily we hear of people over the age of 70 years being beaten, robbed dragged along the ground in car parks and the like. Because they are becoming increasingly the victims, they should be able to try people who commit those types of crimes. If they are young enough to be beaten, robbed and mugged they are young enough to be on juries.

Mr Prince: Statistically the majority of assaults are committed on people between 18 and 25 years of age. I am not diminishing what is happening to elderly people. However, they are in the minority but they receive the publicity.

Mr RIEBELING: The vast majority of people of that age probably do not want to be on juries. However, they should have the opportunity to be on them.

I think it would be much easier for the sheriff's office and the registrars to run a jury system without the stand-aside provisions especially in country areas because a more finite number must be determined. If we remove the stand aside - I do not know why we are removing it - and put in place the real solution, and if we need to ask the minor parties to convince them, I am happy to do that to get it through.

Mr Prince: I do not know where the amendment came from in the other place.

Mr RIEBELING: I do not know where it came from either. We are in a unique position to amend it to enable the legislation to properly reflect how everyone thinks it should operate. However, if the minister wishes to persist, and he has the numbers, I do not wish to hold us up anymore.

Mr PRINCE: I think Hon Helen Hodgson moved it in the other place. I hear what the member says. It is the view of the Attorney and the Government that stand asides and pre-emptory challenges must be looked at together. The problem in the country is that the sheriff is the unfortunate person who has to run it in the city and his problem is a quantum leap bigger than any regional centre because he is doing it day after day for the District and Supreme Courts. We are talking about hundreds of people. It is a logistical nightmare. It is something that must be fixed. My view and the member's view is that the stand-aside should be removed and pre-emptory challenges should be reduced. The question is by how much. That is not what the Legislative Council has done. I have therefore moved to oppose the amended clause which will have the effect of leaving the law as it is, and it is up to the Attorney General, other members and me to formulate something that will hopefully pass the other place and this House.

Clause put and negatived.**Clause 8: Section 36 amended -**

Mr RIEBELING: Can the minister give a quick explanation of the reasons for these breaches of the amendments?

Mr PRINCE: The member has asked a reasonable question, but I do not have the Act with me to answer him.

Mr Riebeling: I assume it is to remove section 36(2) and (3).

Mr PRINCE: Section 36(2) of this Act states -

This Act does not affect the power of any Court at the prayer of those prosecuting for the Crown, to order any juror to stand aside . . .

The original Bill was presented to the other place deleting section 36(2). The amendment by the other place reinstated section 36(2). The amendment that I am now moving is to oppose the amendment from the other place, which leaves the Act as it is for the stand aside to remain.

Clause put and negatived.**Clause 9: Section 38 amended -**

Mr RIEBELING: I presume this is putting back the right of challenge.

Mr PRINCE: I advise members that this clause is similar to the preceding clause, which affected section 36(2). The number of pre-emptory challenges was sought to be amended under section 38 of the Juries Act. The Legislative Council then changed that amendment back to eight challenges. A provision for stand aside is also made in section 38(1) of the Act. This opposes the amendments from the Legislative Council and therefore the Act remains as it is.

Clause put and negatived.**Bill again reported, with further amendments.****CHILD WELFARE AMENDMENT BILL***Report*

Report of Committee adopted.

Third Reading

MRS PARKER (Ballajura - Minister for Family and Children's Services) [12.16 pm]: I move -

That the Bill be now read a third time.

MR CARPENTER (Willagee) [12.17 pm]: This is an important Bill and some amendments have been agreed to as we have proceeded through the committee stage. I would like to take some time to address the Bill as it now stands. The amendments to the Child Welfare Amendment Bill deal with the establishment and operation of a register of children who have been abused. This is a very controversial piece of legislation for people who are affected by this activity. Some interesting times lie ahead of us yet. The Labor Party has had a consistent position on this legislation. The people who will be directly affected by this legislation and how it will apply are gravely concerned by it. Nothing that we have done in the debate on this legislation to date has alleviated those concerns. In fact, some of them have been heightened. Some amendments which were proposed by the member for Mandurah and which were worth considering were not accepted, including the deletion of the address of children who find themselves on this register. If I were the minister, I would be reconsidering my position on that amendment between now and this legislation proceeding to the upper House because that would be one simple step that the Government could take to address some of the more profound concerns from people who are interested in this legislation. The passage of this legislation has not been a smooth ride for the Government, principally because it had so much objection from its own backbench, the Labor Party and some of the Independents. I do not think those concerns have been addressed, which is a shame. At one stage the minister withdrew the legislation. I think it was introduced in September last year and immediate controversy flared. It was withdrawn and reintroduced in March.

[Leave granted for speech to be continued.]

Debate thus adjourned.

[Continued on page 8029.]

WOMEN'S POLICY DEVELOPMENT OFFICE*Statement by Member for Perth*

MS WARNOCK (Perth) [12.20 pm]: This week a number of women have called me with their concerns about what is to become of the Women's Policy Development Office. Apparently there is a plan to put the office into Family and Children's Services. Obviously this proposal has some logic as far as some people are concerned; however, it is causing a great deal of angst to other people. This office, which exists to remind Governments about the separate concerns of women and to devise policy around those concerns, is not well funded, but, nonetheless, it has an important function. Apparently it will be swept into Family and Children's Services where some people feel it will languish and lose both its autonomy and funding.

There is a fear that losing its autonomy will cause the office to lose its ability to direct priorities, actions and strategies. It will also lose the expertise and knowledge of the people who have worked in this area for some time. The Government's commitment to women as independent decision-makers will be negated by this move. What sort of message does this give to women? Are their issues of no concern except as parents of children or as members of families? After 16 years as an agency directed towards women's interests, will the authority of the Women's Policy Development Office be taken away by stealth? That is what some women fear and they ask the minister to make her intentions clear.

INTERNET, CENSORSHIP

Statement by Member for Carine

MRS HODSON-THOMAS (Carine) [12.22 pm]: The Internet is a powerful tool for both sourcing information and communication. Its use is becoming increasingly widespread in the community, particularly among the younger generation. Such progress and advancements in technology, when applied to good use, yield many benefits in enabling individuals to accomplish great things. However, of major concern is the misuse of information made readily available on the Internet; for example, a document sourced from the United States titled, "The Terrorist's Handbook" can be accessed in Perth, or anywhere in the world for that matter. It contains instructions on how to manufacture explosive devices such as letterbox bombs, pipe bombs and nail bombs; information which represents a direct threat to the public interest. Recently, local residents in my electorate have become victims of letterbox bombings, carried out with devices similar to those described in the publication. Furthermore, it has been reported that pipe bombs and nail bombs were used in the tragedies which occurred in Colorado and London. Censorship of the Internet has been an issue for some time. It brings with it the practical difficulty of monitoring the seemingly boundless frontier of information technology in the interests of public safety. Action must be taken to curb the availability of dangerous information with malicious intent. Although the freedom of expression of individuals must be respected, so, too, must the rights of law-abiding citizens to a safe community. It has been said that the price of freedom is eternal vigilance. As legislators, we must be more vigilant about the information which is being accessed by our youth.

CRIME, HILTON AND COOLBELLUP

Statement by Member for Willagee

MR CARPENTER (Willagee) [12.23 pm]: My electorate is located in the greater Fremantle area. It is of great concern to me, as a representative of those suburbs, that, over the past few years, there has been a degradation in government services across the board in that area. I am referring to services such as education, transport, health and, principally, police. There is a crisis in crime in the suburbs of Hilton and Coolbellup. People are demanding that the Government address this problem. We have a new Minister for Police who has shown some interest and I urge him to act quickly to address the concerns in those suburbs. Two weeks ago I presented a petition in Parliament that contained 389 signatures from the residents of Coolbellup. Another petition is circulating, independent of anything I have done, in the suburb of Hilton. A spate of criminal activity is occurring in Hilton which is putting the fear of God into old people in that suburb. It is unfair that people in their later years must live in constant fear of being the victims of crime. They are also concerned about getting into the local hospital and about a range of other matters related to transport and so on. The Hilton Police Station is closed. This is one simple matter that the Government could reverse. In general, the Government must look at the allocation of resources in the greater Fremantle area, particularly in policing. A constant flow of people come into my office and tell me that the situation is getting worse daily. That flow includes members of the police force who work in the area. They want something done.

RADIO LOLLIPOP

Statement by Member for Hillarys

MR JOHNSON (Hillarys) [12.25 pm]: Today I will talk about Radio Lollipop's uniform-free day that was held on Wednesday, 17 March. As many members would be aware, Radio Lollipop entertains children in hospital and is very close to my heart. The charity is run by a dedicated group of members who are committed to making a child's stay in hospital more pleasant. As a charity, Radio Lollipop relies on goodwill and donations to survive. In recent years, Perth bus drivers have arranged what has become an annual event; that is, the bus drivers' uniform-free day. The money raised during this event makes the day-to-day running of Radio Lollipop possible. About 1 000 drivers from Path Transit, Southern Coast Transit, Swan Transit and Perth Bus across the Perth metropolitan area opted for the uniform-free day to raise more than \$50 000 for Radio Lollipop. I was more than impressed with the enthusiasm displayed by the drivers; in fact, I have been told that some commuters were thrilled about being driven by Robin Hood, Xena: Warrior Princess and Batman. As one passenger commented, "It was a great start to the day." I acknowledge the management of bus firms Path Transit, Southern Coast Transit, Swan Transit and Perth Bus, which provided support for the day, and Steve and Pat Salter and Joanne Pollard for assisting with the organisation. I also give a special thankyou to the Department of Transport and the City of Perth for their efforts in making the day so successful. Events such as this help the children at Princess Margaret Hospital for Children and also assist in promoting the worthwhile work Radio Lollipop volunteers do at the various hospitals.

MR SELWYN PETER WILLMOTT

Statement by Member for Armadale

MS MacTIERNAN (Armadale) [12.26 pm]: I want to mark the passing of a very fine man, Selwyn Peter Willmott, earlier this week. On Monday, Peter's funeral was attended by hundreds of mourners, which is a testament to how much he was loved and how much he contributed to the community. It will take more than 90 seconds to detail his contributions, but I

will briefly outline them. At the core of his life was his commitment to his wife Betty, with whom he had a wonderful and fulfilling partnership for 43 years, and to his four children and three grandchildren. His family repaid his lifelong devotion to them during his 18-month illness before his death. Their care for Peter during that time was a great inspiration to all of us who saw it at close hand. Peter served on the Shire of Kalamunda with great distinction for 18 years. He was shire president for six years, changing the baton with his wife Betty. He was a major contributor to the Western Australian Labor Party for two decades, bringing intelligence, industry knowledge, compassion and commitment to all of his hard work for advancing the cause of the Labor movement. He achieved professional success attaining the position of chief geologist with Western Australian Petroleum Pty Ltd and then moved into the public sector. Peter's death will be mourned by all members of the Labor Party.

HEROIN TRIAL

Statement by Member for Joondalup

MR BAKER (Joondalup) [12.28 pm]: The Labor Party's law and order policy of being "soft on illicit drugs" looks like becoming even softer after this weekend when the Labor Party's annual state conference is expected to pass the resolution supported by the members for Willagee and Rockingham advocating the decriminalisation of heroin use and consumption for a select group of heroin users. Why is it necessary for a heroin trial to be conducted in Western Australia, or elsewhere in Australia? If the Labor Party accepts and does not question the alleged results of the completed stages of the Swiss Government's heroin trial or heroin experiment, it should advocate the decriminalisation of heroin as it already does in respect of the use of cannabis. If the Swiss heroin trial results are so compelling, why muck around with yet another trial? Surely addiction is addiction anywhere in the world, be it in Australia or overseas. Are Western Australia's heroin addicts different from those addicts living elsewhere in the world? Of course not. I challenge the Labor Party to march further down the road of advocating the decriminalisation of illicit drugs and to work to decriminalise the use of heroin. Perhaps at next year's state conference the Labor Party could also resolve to decriminalise the possession and use of amphetamines. At this rate, by the year 2030 the Labor Party will have advocated the decriminalisation of all of the illicit drugs currently in the schedules to the Misuse of Drugs Act. That will certainly have the effect of reducing crime rates by removing scores of crimes from Western Australia's statute books.

Mr Carpenter: As advocated by you in your report.

Mr BAKER: The member for Willagee has misread the report.

[Questions without notice taken.]

Sitting suspended from 1.04 to 2.00 pm

APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (No 1) 1999

Second Reading

MR COURT (Nedlands - Treasurer) [2.00 pm]: I move -

That the Bill be now read a second time.

The budget speech is as follows -

One hundred years ago, the then Premier Sir John Forrest brought down the last budget of the Western Australian Government for the nineteenth century.

That budget had a total expenditure of £3 535 769 and the budget speech highlighted the large capital works program that was being implemented in the State as a result of the 1890s gold rush.

They were in the middle of the construction of the Fremantle Harbour and the Goldfields Water Scheme.

Significantly, that budget allocated £96 515 or 2.7 per cent of expenditure to education.

How things have changed!

In bringing down the last budget of the twentieth century, Western Australia has now grown to the point where we have a total budget of \$7.7 billion and expenditure of \$1.78 billion or 23 per cent on education and training.

This figure alone highlights the major priority that we are giving to education in making sure that people of all age groups, but particularly our youth, have the skills required to be competitive in a rapidly changing and increasingly globalised world - we are becoming the smart State.

This budget has been designed to ensure stability in the Western Australian economy and public finances as we navigate around Asia's difficulties - one of the greatest economic crises we have faced since the Second World War.

It is our second budget presented with full accrual accounting and, on that basis, an operating surplus of \$171 million is expected in 1999-2000, despite weaker revenue growth, with larger surpluses in the out-years.

Last year, we forecast that surplus to be \$471 million but we have made a deliberate decision to increase expenditure into the priority areas of education, health, and law and order. In fact, we decided to increase these expenditures in 1998-99 and the service levels are maintained in this budget.

Highlights in the priority areas are -

- education and training - expenditure of \$1 780 million is an increase of \$184.4 million over the 1998-99 budget estimate;
- health - expenditure of \$1 794 million is an increase of \$153.3 million over the 1998-99 budget estimate; and
- law and order and justice - expenditure of \$789.1 million is an increase of \$61.8 million over the 1998-99 budget estimate.

To further strengthen the economy this year we are also implementing a one-off major increase in capital investment. Much of this is occurring in the government trading enterprises and other agencies which have been traditionally off the budget. This investment will assist in stimulating the economy and creating more jobs in a period when private investment will decline.

Like the Forrest budget 100 years ago, it will build essential social and economic infrastructure for our growing economy.

Our total capital works program will increase by more than \$600 million from our forward estimates to a record \$3.3 billion in this budget. In 1992-93, the total capital works expenditure across government was \$1.6 billion, less than half of that proposed in this budget.

The investments include -

- a \$199 million increase in the Keystart Housing Scheme funding to \$499 million giving low to moderate income home buyers access to their own homes. So far, the scheme has assisted more than 30 000 Western Australians into home ownership. This scheme is regarded nationally as a leader in its field. In this budget, loans are expected to be advanced to another 5 000 people to enter either new or acquired homes. 4 600 of these loans will be to first home buyers;
- water infrastructure will be enhanced with an additional \$115 million to build the \$61 million Harvey dam, new waste water treatment plants, new ground water schemes and country infrastructure, bringing the total capital investment by the Water Corporation to \$465 million this year. This is essential infrastructure to ensure our growing population is adequately provided with water in the future;
- the Western Australian Land Authority will invest an additional \$93 million on industrial land projects to ensure that suitable industrial estates are accessible and, of great importance, unencumbered;
- Western Power will spend an additional \$33 million primarily to enhance the non-interconnected system to people living in Meekatharra, Cue and Mt Magnet. This brings total expenditure to \$262 million;
- additional rail expenditure of \$51 million, bringing the total to \$169.8 million, will modernise rolling stock;
- there will be an additional \$35 million, principally for new buses, bringing Department of Transport capital expenditure to \$80 million;
- Education capital works is boosted by \$46 million to \$152 million which will include a number of significant new schools; and
- \$10 million will go to regional port development at Esperance and Geraldton.

By reducing debt in better times, and not squandering the proceeds of asset sales, we have positioned ourselves well in these more difficult circumstances.

In the past six years the Government has worked steadily to build rock solid foundations for the future.

For six years the total public sector has funded most of its capital works from revenue, with very little recourse to borrowing. Accordingly, our net debt levels are historically low.

It was pleasing in the last year to win back the State's triple A credit rating which was lost in the Labor years. However, we cannot turn a blind eye to the low commodity prices and the lag effects of the Asian difficulties.

Now we can respond to our current circumstances with a strategy to provide further stability and growth. Key features of our strategy are:

- to partly divert our operating surplus to the priority areas of education, health, and law and order;
- to tighten the belt marginally in other spending areas; and
- to make necessary investments in utilities, roads, rail, housing and industrial infrastructure at a time when private investment growth has weakened.

Our asset base will increase significantly more than the debt increases. Net assets have increased from \$16.7 billion in June 1994 to \$33.9 billion in June 2000.

Even with this major capital works boost, the budget will see net debt fall as a share of GSP and interest fall as a share of revenue over the forward estimates period.

I have stated that we will tighten our belt in some areas. Most agencies have been kept to their forward estimates figures or have had some reductions. These cuts are generally small, in total \$57 million, and they are to be absorbed by productivity improvements.

With our goal of maintaining both momentum and stability in the economy, the Government has kept taxes and charges low. There is only one revenue raising measure, modest increases in some charges and the Government has decided not to increase electricity and gas tariffs.

The impact of these increases on an average family is less than eighty cents per week.

Despite these modest increases, household charges are expected to continue to fall as a proportion of average weekly earnings.

It must be noted that we have not built into the budget the proposed sale of AlintaGas and Westrail as it has previously been our policy not to take these sales into account until they are successfully completed.

The successful sale of AlintaGas and Westrail would allow no increase in net debt and substantially fund the Perth to Mandurah railway.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Following the record 8% growth levels in 1997-98, off the back of record business investment and exports, growth dropped to 3.25% in 1998-99. We are forecasting real economic growth of 4.5% in 1999-2000.

Over the past two years, the Western Australian economy has performed well, despite unprecedented uncertainty in world economic conditions.

Against a backdrop of declining world demand and falling prices for many of the State's exports, the annual total of investment spending in 1998 soared to a record \$12.4 billion.

Several exciting new major investment projects, adding value to our natural resources, have now completed the construction stage.

In 1999-2000, there will be around \$10 billion worth of investment spending across the State, spread throughout the economy.

There is a number of prospective new, large scale investments in the minerals and energy sector. When they go ahead will, as always, depend on a range of factors including the outlook for growth in our trading partners.

Encouragingly, there are tentative signs that some of our Asian trading partners may have the worst behind them. Regrettably, Japan remains stagnant but Korea, for example, is moving back into positive growth.

Exciting new markets in Asia are emerging despite the downturn.

Employment growth is forecast to be sustained at 2% as against 2.5% in 1998-99.

Since the Coalition took office, it has created 155,300 new jobs.

Wages growth is forecast at 3.5%.

Inflation is forecast at 2.25% against the estimate of 1.75% for 1998-99.

EXPENDITURE

In 1998-99, the Government made a policy decision to increase expenditure in the priority areas of health, education and law and order.

This resulted in real growth in outlays of 5.2%.

This increased level of expenditure will continue this year with a nominal increase of \$186.4 million so service levels can be maintained and improved.

Priority has again been given to health, education, and law and order with a tight rein on the balance of recurrent expenditure.

As I said, Mr Speaker, a significant feature is an additional \$600 million on top of our forward estimates for the total public sector's capital program, bringing it to a record \$3.3 billion.

Education and Training

Education and training in this budget totals \$1.78 billion, which is \$184.4 million higher than the 1998-99 budget estimates. This high level of service continues because it is important that we make our mark as the smart State.

The \$100 million computers in schools program and the training programs which go with it are equipping our youngsters with the skills, knowledge and confidence to challenge for jobs anywhere in Australia or abroad.

Our goal is for every secondary school to have at least one computer for every five students and one for every 10 primary children by the year 2002.

This government has built 23 new primary schools, three new high schools, established 18 education support centres for students with disabilities and has made inroads into the backlog of school maintenance work inherited in 1993.

As part of commitments made under Local Area Education Planning last year, \$150 million worth of first class education facilities will be provided for secondary students. This plan includes the new Shenton College to replace the Hollywood and Swanbourne high schools, and a new state-of-the-art senior campus at Cannington.

Another \$18 million is budgeted in 1999-2000 for new schools at Boddington, Bunbury and Denmark.

\$8 million will be spent on construction of the new \$16m Halls Head Middle School and a further \$8.2 million on the new Peel Senior Campus, which forms part of a \$22 million collocated facility with the South Metropolitan College of TAFE.

The Government's Early Childhood Education Program is, this year, offering a kindergarten and preschool place to all Western Australian children and a further \$10 million has been committed for additional early childhood education.

A further \$14 million over four years has been provided to attract and retain experienced teachers in rural areas through the Country Incentives Scheme.

Teachers now also have the advantage of developing more flexible programs to suit the particular needs of their students through the Curriculum Framework.

In this budget there is \$127.2 million in per capita funding to non-government schools.

Our students are receiving a variety of training for their journey through life and we should take some comfort from the success of the Cadets WA scheme.

There are now 102 units in the scheme including military, State Emergency Services, police rangers, bush rangers, Red Cross and St John Ambulance.

Our Youth Advisory Councils and courses conducted by Leadership WA, which was established last year, have also been very successful. This budget contains \$7.1 million to enable the Office of Youth Affairs to continue this good work.

Those who end their school days seeking advanced or new skills have a full range of options at our TAFE colleges and other tertiary institutions.

TAFE capital works projects in this budget will include:

\$9.6 million for the South West TAFE at Bunbury;

\$5.9 million at Geraldton;

a \$3.9 million marine and fishing industry and education and training facility, also at Central West College of TAFE, Geraldton;

\$1.5 million to relocate the Katanning campus;

planning will begin on the projected \$11.7 million development of Beaconsfield campus of South Metropolitan TAFE; and

\$1.3 million has been allocated to relocate the Moora campus of the C Y O'Connor College.

The *Access All Areas* program, a Western Australian-developed initiative, has already opened up a new avenue for youth employment opportunities.

The proof of our training policies is the 93.6 per cent increase in apprenticeships since 1993. LandCare has created 200 traineeships.

Health

The Health budget for 1999-2000 is \$1.8 billion which is \$153 million more than the 1998-99 budget estimates and represents nearly one quarter of State expenditure.

We have built three of the most modern regional health campuses in Australia and a fourth, the redeveloped Armadale Health Service, will be operational within the next two years.

Further redevelopment is continuing at Bunbury where we have built an outstanding new health campus, the new Broome Hospital redevelopment has been completed and major work is being undertaken at Busselton, Moora, Narrogin and Kalgoorlie.

Instead of the old policy of centralising most services in Perth we are taking the services to where they are needed - to where the people are.

The best recent news on health is the success of the five-year \$125 million elective surgery program under the Government's Central Wait List Bureau, which was established last year.

The waiting lists are at 13,852 which is the lowest level in 16 months. In March, 2,573 patients were admitted to teaching hospitals. That represented an increase of 871 over the previous month and 1,137 more than in January.

Of the cases identified at the start of the wait list strategy in August last year, the hospitals are now three-quarters of the way through the number of cataract operations and more than halfway through hip and knee surgery.

The Government is pleased to receive a boost in the fight against drugs.

The Commonwealth's decision to contribute to the States' efforts will be a welcome contribution to reinforce our anti-drug abuse programs.

The emphasis will be on early intervention and providing more access to treatment places.

We have already established 51 local drug action groups, strong education programs and family support.

All this has occurred since the \$4 million *Together Against Drugs* program was launched less than two years ago.

Law and Order, and Justice

The expenditure of \$789 million in this budget, for law, order and justice, is an increase of \$61.7 million above the 1998-99 estimates, strengthening our SAFER WA initiatives.

SAFER WA is a partnership of the Government, the police, local councils, and, above all, the community.

The combined Police-SAFER WA initiatives are achieving results and generating strong community support.

Police

In the Year 2000 new police facilities will open at Rockingham, Busselton, Geraldton, Clarkson and Lockridge. This will bring to 26 the number of new police facilities built by the Government over the past four years.

Provision has been made in this budget for architectural plans for the \$3 million Kensington station to replace those at South Perth and Victoria Park.

Construction will commence on the \$45 million police academy at Joondalup with a \$10.8 million allocation in this budget.

Work will also start on the \$42 million police operations centre at Midland and the \$124 million Delta Communications and Technology Plan to give the service the most modern technology and equipment will continue, with \$16 million allocated in this budget.

It is anticipated that the equivalent of close to 100 police officers will be freed up to return to normal police duties through the transfer of the management of prisoner transportation and court security services from the Police Service to the Ministry of Justice. Western Australia has by far the highest police to population ratio for any State in Australia and our police are among the best paid.

Western Australia has by far the highest police to population ratio for any State in Australia and our police are among the best paid.

Justice

There is a need for more prisons to meet the demands of the majority of Western Australians who want tougher treatment for criminals who threaten the safety of law abiding people.

Significant projects included in this budget are the new medium security prison at Wooroloo, additional accommodation at Canning Vale, at Rangeview for juveniles and at Bandyup and Pyrton.

Following the success of the two existing work camps at Walpole and Badgingarra, we will develop four more camps.

The six camps, some of which will be mobile, will involve 50 prisoners operating on a seven day a week basis at a total cost of \$2.7 million in 1999-2000.

About 80 prisoners have gone through the award-winning Walpole work camp established 18 months ago and Warramia work camp near Badgingarra established eight months ago.

The success of the camps can be gauged by the continuing strong support from the local communities and the dedication of the prisoners - none of whom has tried to escape.

Fire and Emergency Services

In this budget we have allocated \$8.6 million which includes provision for new equipment and upgrade of facilities in all regions.

The Government has changed the face of Fire and Emergency Services in recent years by combining them under one roof and increasing funds to put the service on a better equipped footing. This has paid off handsomely for the people the services are safeguarding.

We have made further funding available in this budget for training purposes, the completion of the Forrestfield Training Academy and a \$695,000 increase for the operation of the Volunteer Sea Search and Rescue Services.

The Environment

The Regional Forest Agreement, signed this week, is a victory for balance and common sense.

It means that our children will enjoy our old growth forests forever.

It is impossible to please everyone, but this agreement does the following:

- it means more than two thirds of our old growth forests will remain untouched;
- the remainder will be among the best managed forests in the world;
- the Government will create 12 new national parks and 90 new conservation reserves or additions to existing reserves;
- a new Forest Production Commission will have responsibility for commercial timber operations in native forests. CALM will not be involved; and
- the forest-based timber industry is also receiving support and a \$59 million package will be available to assist.

Transport and Roads

The Department of Transport receives a budget of \$760 million to enhance our transport infrastructure. Our large roads program of \$742 million in 1999-2000 includes around \$300 million additional funds provided from sources other than the Department of Transport.

Without a first class road network, Western Australia would be unable to take advantage of its many outstanding resource and tourism projects and our agricultural sector, one of the best and biggest in Australia, would also be impeded.

That's why we embarked on the first billion dollar road program five years ago.

Now, through TransformWA, our second billion dollar program, we are building the finest road system in Australia.

Work is about to begin on the \$49 million second Narrows Bridge for additional car and non-stop bus lanes which, by Christmas 2000, will be operating, relieving traffic congestion to the southern suburbs, improving safety and reducing pollution.

This also applies to the Graham Farmer Freeway and the Burswood bridge.

They will give Perth a free-flowing east-west traffic system and divert vehicles around the CBD. The removal of the Loftus and Lord streets bottlenecks will also be seen as a blessing by thousands of motorists.

Within twelve months, the Mitchell Freeway extension to Hodges Drive will be operational and work will start on widening the freeway from Karrinyup Road to Hepburn Avenue.

In the rural and regional areas, this year's program includes \$19 million of the \$97 million for the Mt Magnet to Agnew road, and \$15.2 million for the Mt Keith to Wiluna section of the Goldfields Highway.

Under the Government's System 21 Ten Year Better Public Transport Plan, another 130 new buses will be put into service and the CAT inner city services will be extended.

Commerce and Trade, Technology

The total budget is \$94.3 million and includes work to begin on the \$200 million maritime support facility at Jervoise Bay and the marine industry technology park in the same precinct.

When the engineering project is completed this State will be well placed to win a greater share of the multi-million dollar resource-related construction industry.

The \$10 million Statewide Telecommunications Enhancement Program, known as STEP, is being progressively implemented to give all Western Australians, no matter where they live, the best services, including tele-health, video conferencing, the Internet and electronic commerce.

Electronic commerce will also be a feature of Commerce and Trade's on-line Business and Investment Embassy. This Internet-based gateway will provide information to international investors and promote our State as a place for opportunities, to do business, to work and live.

Primary Industry

The combined budget for Agriculture and Fisheries is \$108.25 million.

But that funding is only part of the story.

For most of this century, Western Australia has been one of the outstanding agricultural States and, for many years now has been a world leader in cereal production and a prolific producer of wool, with a sheep population of around thirty million.

Transport, roads, the sciences, education, health and so many other agencies continue to throw their efforts behind the men and women on the land and those in the country towns who are supporting them.

In 1999-2000, Agriculture WA will undertake these initiatives -

- \$2.5 million to support interstate freight quarantine services;
- \$3.3 million for the management of feral wildlife and \$490,000 to maintain the State Barrier Fence;
- \$1 million for the final stages of the Footrot Eradication Program;

- \$1.5 million to promote the wool industry;
- \$1.2 million for research and development into new pasture species;
- \$2.4 million to continue the *Better Business Program*; and
- \$2.3 million for the *Progress Rural WA* initiative.

There is continued funding for crop improvement programs and food and fibre promotions in South East Asia.

Capital funding of \$22.8 million is allocated to expand agricultural and horticultural production on the Ord River, with \$1.4 million available in this budget.

A provision of \$1.8 million has been made as part of the Government's total funding of \$27.2 million for agricultural centres and regional accommodation.

The Government has continued its commitment to the protection of the State's fisheries and its fish stock. The budget estimates include an amount of \$2 million for the continued Aquaculture project and \$2 million is provided to ensure sustainability of the fishstock which would provide a legacy for future generations of Western Australians.

Regions

As I have already demonstrated, Mr Speaker, much of what we are doing in this budget is reaching all Western Australians. It is a seamless service which means our rural and remote residents are not disadvantaged.

As we enter the 21st century we want all of our citizens to be recipients of the same facilities and special services available in the city.

There will always be special requirements exclusive to specific areas and they will be dealt with on their merits.

What I can say, Mr Speaker, is that we are developing a special program for our regions which is an Australian first.

We are finalising the nation's most comprehensive regional development policy. The policy has been developed through a steering committee involving fifteen State Government agencies. A total of 42 agencies were investigated or consulted to produce the most far-reaching and integrated regional development policy in Australia. A draft regional development policy will be presented to Cabinet in mid-1999, released for public consultation soon after and a final policy will be launched later this year.

In this budget, each of the regional development commissions receives special purpose funding. For example, the Gascoyne is receiving \$1 million over three years for the Aboriginal and Heritage Cultural Centre and \$300,000 for work on a passenger terminal at Learmonth Airport.

The Mid West Commission receives \$5.3 million for the continuation of the construction of the museum at Geraldton. This museum will be important in imparting the history of the Dutch shipwrecks.

A further \$3.82 million goes to the Batavia Coast Marina development.

In the Pilbara, \$1.23 million has been allotted this year to further the development of a visitors' centre at the Karijini National Park.

Native Title

Mr Speaker, for some years our critics have claimed that the Government has had an obsession with native title.

Our obsession is to put a workable legislative framework in place.

Everything we predicted is coming true and regional Western Australia is being badly affected.

In this State, our economic prospects are endangered by the present unworkable system. Unless the system is changed, it will collapse. In this budget we have provided an additional \$850,000 for negotiation and implementation of native title agreements.

Tourism

The Tourism Commission receives funding of \$37.8 million, an increase on forward estimates of \$7.7 million. Tourism's promotion budget, including the successful and ongoing Elle campaign, is \$10.8 million. In addition, the Tourism Development Fund for regional facilities has been allocated \$3 million over the next two years.

Kings Park remains our most visited tourist attraction and a \$5.1 million program is under way for the protection and enhancement of the Mt Eliza scarp. A major plan for Kings Park will be ready for public comment in October.

Our tourism potential will be enhanced with the redevelopment of Barrack Square at a cost of \$19.2 million. Work will begin on phase one of The Waterfront, Fremantle, maritime museum and exhibition area, at a cost of \$20.6 million in 1999-2000.

The Tourism Commission is now managing the development of the planned Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre Project and, with expenditure of \$3.2 million in 1999-2000, the seven expressions of interest which have been received will be progressed through assessment.

Social Services

The Government is particularly proud of its Disability Services program. The \$644.8 million Disability Services budget has funded some impressive programs under the *Count Us In* strategy. Disability is a sensitive and compelling issue and for 1999-2000, the last year of this five-year program, we have made a commitment of \$151.7 million. There is a need for even more funding, but the States have been unable to make any headway in their negotiations with the Commonwealth. We are optimistic that the next round of ministerial talks will have better results.

Family and Children's Services will receive recurrent funding of \$153 million, an increase of \$2.5 million, to pursue strategies to support families and provide care and protection for children. An allocation of \$1.5 million will provide a new community-based low interest loan scheme to help low income families avoid the poverty trap.

Although this budget places great emphasis on the future generation, the Government is committed to helping our older people and a major new plan in this, the International Year of Older Persons, is a Centre for Positive Ageing which is supported by all of our universities.

Aboriginal Affairs

There is total funding of \$17.6 million which includes an ongoing allocation of \$1.5 million to take the department's regional offices from seven to 23. The Jigalong demonstration project will be completed soon and is expected to improve the quality of life of the community there. The second project at Oombulgurri is also nearing completion.

Numerous other agencies, including Commerce and Trade, have programs involving Aboriginal people in training and self-employment. The Government believes that education and training is the answer to Aboriginal employment and that is borne out by the fact that there are now hundreds of indigenous people working in the public service.

On the issue of social behaviour, the Government will provide another \$800 000 to support the Aboriginal patrols, which now number 16, and are doing an excellent job of reducing anti-social behaviour among their people. The community-based patrols have played a significant part in reducing by up to 50 per cent the number of indigenous people being sent to police lockups.

REVENUES

Our revenues are flat in 1999-2000, largely as a result of Grants Commission cuts and lower royalties flowing from subdued commodity prices.

There is only one tax increase - stamp duties on motor vehicles sales. From 1 July 1999 we will be introducing a sliding scale for the stamp duty that relates to the sale and licensing of motor vehicles. A car worth, say, \$15 000, will attract a stamp duty bill \$75 less than what it does today. From \$15 000 up, the stamp duty will increase until it reaches 5 per cent on vehicles valued at \$40 000 or more. For all vehicles valued at less than \$20 000, which account for about three-quarters of total sales, the stamp duty will be less than it is under the existing flat 3 per cent rate. Nevertheless, the new scale is expected to raise additional revenue in 1999-2000 of \$21.6 million and \$25 million in a full year.

A new land tax scale will benefit land owners by reducing the impact of bracket creep. The new scale provides concessions to taxpayers totalling around \$7 million a year.

The Government has decided not to increase gas and electricity tariffs, but sewerage, drainage and water rates will go up by a modest 2 per cent.

In a bid to reduce water consumption, as well as encouraging people to be pro-active in water conservation, the following increases are proposed -

- a 5 per cent increase will apply to consumption between 350 kilolitres and 550 kilolitres for metropolitan households and 350 kilolitres and 750 kilolitres for country households;

- there will be a 10 per cent increase for metropolitan consumption above 550 kilolitres and 750 kilolitres in the country; and

- there is also a restructuring of the tariffs and charges for business customers to better reflect actual consumption rather than on property values.

There will have to be some increases in bus and train fares to meet the cost of more frequent services and improvements to the bus and rail fleets. The proposed changes are not excessive and are in line with the Government's previously announced plan that fares should contribute 40 per cent of operating costs by the year 2001.

There will be an average 2.3 per cent increase in standard fares and 3.8 per cent increase in concession fares. But even under this new scale, 80 per cent of standard fares and more than 90 per cent of concessions will be either unaffected or will result in no more than an extra ten cents per journey.

Finally, there will be an equally modest 3.6 per cent increase in compulsory third party insurance premiums but, even then, compulsory third party insurance for a private motor car will still be the lowest in Australia. I repeat, the cost of these increases to an average family is only 80 cents a week.

CONCLUSION

Mr Speaker, the State has experienced remarkable economic strength in recent years and that is borne out by the quality of

our services and the growth in assets. This budget acknowledges the levelling out of some aspects of the economy. It is a blueprint for stability. In more difficult times, it maintains essential services at the highest level and creates an environment for jobs for our young people.

I would now like to go to the formal purposes of the two Appropriation Bills which seek the sums required for services in the coming financial year. Appropriation Bill No 1 is for recurrent services and Appropriation Bill No 2 is for capital services.

The recurrent expenditure estimates of \$7 254 200 000 include a sum of \$1 085 770 000 permanently appropriated under Special Acts, leaving an amount of \$6 168 430 000 which is to be appropriated in the manner shown in the Schedule to Appropriation Bill No 1.

The capital expenditure estimates and financial transactions of \$524 500 000 comprise a sum of \$45 400 000 permanently appropriated under Special Acts and an amount of \$479 100 000 which is to be appropriated in the manner shown in the Schedule to Appropriation Bill No 2.

Before completing this speech, I thank Treasury officials who have helped put together this budget. Without doubt it has been the most difficult budget we have prepared because of the current economic circumstances. I thank the Under Treasurer, John Langoulant, and his team, including David Imber, Andrew Chuk and Tim Marney, and all of the other members of Treasury for the work they have done.

Mr Speaker, I commend the Bill to the House and seek leave to table -

*1999-2000 Budget Speech
1999-2000 Budget Statements - Volume 1
1999-2000 Budget Statements - Volume 2
1999-2000 Budget Statements - Volume 3
1999-2000 Economic and Fiscal Overview*

[See papers Nos 937, 938, 939 and 940.]

Debate adjourned, on motion by Dr Gallop (Leader of the Opposition).

APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (No 2) 1999

Second Reading

MR COURT (Nedlands - Treasurer) [2.40 pm]: I move -

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr Speaker, the budget speech dealing with the consolidated fund estimates outlined details of both recurrent and capital outlays. I do not intend therefore to say more at this stage.

The Bill seeks supply and appropriation from the consolidated fund for the capital services and purposes during the 1999-2000 financial year as expressed in the schedule to the Bill and as detailed in the agency information in support of the estimates in the 1999-2000 *Budget Statements*.

Included in the capital expenditure and financing transactions estimates of \$524.5m is an amount of \$45.4m authorised by other statutes, leaving an amount of \$479.1m Appropriation (Consolidated Fund) Bill (No 2). I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Cunningham.

LOAN BILL 1999

Second Reading

MR COURT (Nedlands - Treasurer) [2.41 pm]: I move -

That the Bill be now read a second time.

This Bill seeks the necessary authority for the raising of loans to enable the State to assume responsibility for the debt raised on its behalf by the Commonwealth under the 1927 financial agreement between the Commonwealth and the States.

Authority to borrow for the purpose of redeeming maturing financial agreement debt has been provided for in the Loan (Financial Agreement) Act 1991 and the Loan Acts 1991 to 1995 and 1997 and is expected to continue for a number of years until the State assumes full responsibility for this particular category of debt.

Redemption of maturing financial agreement debt is in accordance with the agreement between the States and the Commonwealth, that the States would assume responsibility for this debt on a phased basis over the period 1990-91 to 2005-06.

The Commonwealth compensates the States and Territories for the additional borrowing costs of this change based on interest margins between Commonwealth and State debt applying at, and prior to, the change. In addition, the Commonwealth provides compensation for its reduced sinking fund contributions due to the accelerated decline in outstanding debt on which those contributions are based.

The borrowing authority being sought this year for the raising of loans of up to \$260m is for the purpose of the redemption of maturing financial agreement debt only and no authority is being sought for borrowings for public purposes generally.

The level of borrowing authorisation for the redemption of maturing financial agreement debt has been determined after taking into account the unexpired balance of previous authorisations as at 30 June 1999. It is also necessary to have sufficient borrowing authority to cover the maturing financial agreement debt for a period of up to six months after the close of the financial year pending the passing of a similar measure in 2000. The balance of the authorisation at 30 June 1999 for redemption of maturing financial agreement debt is estimated to be \$10.1m.

Mr Speaker, the machinery nature of this Bill is consistent with the corresponding provisions in the Loan (Financial Agreement) Act 1991 and Loan Acts 1991 to 1995 and 1997 which have also contained the authority to borrow for the purpose of redeeming maturing financial agreement debt.

In accordance with clause 4 of the Bill, the proceeds of all loans raised under this authority for redeeming maturing financial agreement debt must be credited to an account called the "redemption of financial agreement debt account", which is part of the trust fund under the Financial Administration and Audit Act and that moneys in the account are only to be used for the purpose of redeeming maturing financial agreement debt.

In addition to seeking the authority for loan raisings, the Bill also permanently appropriates moneys from the consolidated fund to meet principal repayments, interest and other expenses of borrowings under this authority. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Cunningham.

TREASURER'S ADVANCE AUTHORIZATION BILL 1999

Second Reading

MR COURT (Nedlands - Treasurer) [2.43 pm]: I move -

That the Bill be now read a second time.

The Treasurer's Advance Authorization Bill authorises the Treasurer to make certain payments and advances for authorised purposes chargeable to the consolidated fund or the Treasurer's advance account within the monetary limit available for the financial year commencing 1 July 1999.

The monetary limit specified within clause 4 of the Bill represents an authorisation for the Treasurer to withdraw up to \$300m for the financing of payments and advances in the 1999-2000 financial year. The purposes for which payments and advances may be made from the Treasurer's advance are set out within clause 5 of the Bill and remain unchanged from those authorised in previous years. Where payments are made in respect of a new item or for supplementation of an existing item of expenditure in the consolidated fund, those payments will be charged against the fund and submitted for parliamentary appropriation in the next financial year.

Members will be aware that a number of activities, such as rental of government offices, are initially financed by way of a Treasurer's advance which is subsequently recouped from the department or statutory authority on whose behalf the service was performed or rental paid. Advances provided for other purposes are repayable by the recipient. In addition, the Bill seeks supplementation of \$160m against the monetary limit authorized for the 1998-99 financial year. Part of the additional funding is required to meet the increasing level of services provided by agencies. In particular, \$70m will be provided to assist public hospitals plus an additional \$35m of hospital funding grants from the Commonwealth has been applied to reducing waiting lists in public hospitals. \$50m will be allocated to the Education Department to fund this Government's commitment to reduce class sizes and other initiatives in schools and \$15.5m for the local area planning initiatives associated with schools in the western suburbs and the south-east corridor of the metropolitan area. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Cunningham.

CHILD WELFARE AMENDMENT BILL

Third Reading

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MR CARPENTER (Willagee) [2.45 pm]: Having one's third reading speech spliced by the budget makes one lose one's sense of continuity. However, I will continue my remarks on the Child Welfare Amendment Bill.

Some increases have been made in the proposed penalties, which the Australian Labor Party supports; however, we still believe other issues must be addressed and have not been resolved by the passage of this legislation through the lower House, despite the efforts of various people. I believe the minister has taken on board some of the positions put and some points could be reconsidered when the legislation is debated in the other place.

The Bill seeks to establish a register of abused children with the stated aim of improving service delivery for these children. However, a combination of faulty legislation and difficulties in the Government's handling of it has resulted in an unusual situation in the passage of the legislation which at times resembled farce. I understand the internal problems that the Government faced; it is probably looking forward to a more united position when the legislation reaches the other place.

The Labor Party's position on this register is that if such a register is required, it should be held in an office of children

independent of Family and Children's Services because there is a fear among people affected by the legislation that information held on the register as proposed could fall into the wrong hands and be misused, and children could be placed at risk. Despite considerable debate among all members, government, independent and those on this side of the House, some issues relating to the protection of children have not been addressed in a satisfactory way. For example, why should the name of a child who has been the victim of physical or sexual abuse in a one-off situation by any member of the community, and there is no belief that the risk is ongoing or likely to be repeated, be kept on a register virtually in perpetuity in Family and Children's Services with that information available to anybody who can access it for one reason or another? Parents have every right to be concerned about the confidentiality of information and to express the strongest concerns about circumstances such as that which I just outlined.

As the Opposition has said repeatedly during debate on this legislation, it believes the focus of a register of this nature should be more on the offenders than those who are offended against. The situation I just outlined is a perfect example of why the Opposition feels that way. Under this legislation the details of a child who has been abused in a one-off situation will be stored on a register in Family and Children's Services despite the wishes of the parent. That is wrong. An assessment could be made as to whether the child would be at further risk and many children would not be. We have yet to hear any justification for the details of those cases being included on a register such as that contemplated in this legislation.

Despite her efforts the minister has been unable to allay fears that the register might be misused. I do not believe any guarantee can be given along those lines because, in the end, the information on the register is held at the discretion of a manager and two assistants. There is no way to guarantee that the information will not be passed on. As we said yesterday, the Government can guarantee that if such a misuse occurs and is discovered, heavy penalties will apply but it cannot guarantee that the information will not be misused. To make such an assertion is to simply fail to face reality. The debate on this legislation has also shown that the minister has been unable to prove that the information on the register will be completely secure. We have heard about stand-alone computers not being accessible via other computers and the employment of encryption methodologies to prevent information being downloaded and passed on, but that does not preclude the possibility of the information being disseminated. As we heard yesterday, documents of notification will be created from the information on the register. It is possible for the information on each case to be assembled and disseminated individually or as a body of documents. There is no getting around that; it is possible and that possibility will always exist regardless of the arguments we have heard in this place. Similarly the minister has been unable to justify her assertion that no list of abused children can be created from the register. That is simply not true. A list can be created and we debated how that could occur. It would not necessarily be a particularly easy thing to achieve but it could happen. That is a primary cause of some of the discontent people feel about the functioning of this register.

The Wood royal commission in New South Wales in its investigation into paedophilia demonstrated that people with particular proclivities, including paedophilia, will go to all sorts of lengths to find information about abused children because they are deemed to be likely to be more susceptible to further abuse. One feels a sense of horror at the prospect of the centralisation of information about children who have been abused and the capacity for someone to have access to that information and trade in it. The register proposed in this legislation will not be immune from such a possibility regardless of the safeguards put in place. In the end, human beings will be the gatekeepers of the information and human beings are capable of being fallible as has been shown repeatedly in the child welfare and protection area. The minister asserted that the creation of the register could be justified by reference to the New South Wales Wood royal commission but we have demonstrated that that is not the case. The Wood royal commission did not recommend the creation of a register along these lines and it is misleading to assert that it did.

The minister has been forced to admit that the security of the register and freedom from potential abuse relies upon the integrity of the register manager. That is the truth of the matter; security relies on the integrity of those who manage the information. People who are opposed to this register say that nobody should be placed in a position of having that responsibility. If we accept a register along the lines proposed in this legislation, we must also accept that ultimately we are relying almost entirely upon the integrity of those who manage the information. That is an onerous responsibility. Unfortunate assertions have been made in this debate about some of the people involved in this process and that has caused some distress to those people as is inevitable when proceeding in this direction. The people with responsibility for security of information will eventually be accused of misusing their positions. I feel sympathy for the people who will take up the roles of manager and custodians of this information because my limited experience in this field has been that the vast majority of the people in it are deeply committed to the welfare of children and it will be terrible to have allegations of paedophilia and other gross indecencies raised against them. However, that possibility arises with the creation of a register of this nature. If the Government wishes to proceed in this direction, it must accept that that will happen and has already happened. The minister knows those allegations have been made.

The minister has been unable to demonstrate how her assertion that the overwhelming majority of parents and guardians will be notified if their child is placed on the register can be tested in any meaningful way. Members asked questions about that notification but did not receive any verifiable information. The assertions made by the minister along these lines cannot be proven or tested by the Parliament or people attempting to oversee the workings of the legislation and the implications of the functioning of the register. Parliament cannot determine whether the notification process is working properly. It is most unfortunate that no system has been put in place to allow that level of accountability. It may be in the Government's interest to develop a proposition to address the matter of accountability to Parliament before the legislation reaches the upper House because many parliamentarians have found that trying to hold government departments and ministers accountable is no easy task; it is often impossible.

The minister has been unable to tell Parliament exactly how many approved persons have been given access to the information on the register so far. I found it surprising and disconcerting that sensitive information held on this register can,

at the manager's discretion, be passed on to approved persons. During the committee stage, the manager was sitting in the Chamber when we were examining the history and the functions of the register. It is mind boggling that the manager and the minister are not able to tell us how many approved persons have been provided with information from the register when we are told that Parliament will be able to hold the minister and the department accountable for the functions of the register. That is simply not the case. Concern along those lines is genuine, and it has not been addressed. The Government should examine that matter again.

The minister has been unable to provide an adequate explanation of why an assessment of the register's two-year pilot project was not carried out before the current legislation was introduced into the Parliament. That should have been a prerequisite. If a pilot project along any lines is set up, one would naturally carry out an assessment of its efficiencies and deficiencies before seeking to institutionalise it with legislation. I was amazed that no assessment along those lines was carried out. It should have been. In the seven or eight months since the introduction of this legislation into the Parliament in September - at that stage it was not deemed to be likely to be particularly controversial - there has been adequate time to carry out an assessment of the two-year pilot program and for that assessment to be reported to the Parliament so that members would have greater knowledge and be in a better position to debate this legislation.

Prior to dealing with the budget, I may have mentioned that one of the suggestions raised by the member for Mandurah was that the addresses of children whose names are held on the register should be deleted from it. I will briefly dwell on that point. The fear that parents have about the operation of this register is that information about their children who may have been sexually or physically abused by someone will fall into the hands of potential or actual paedophiles, as predators, and that those paedophiles will seek out their children and seek to abuse them. It happens. It has happened in New South Wales, as revealed by the Wood royal commission; it has happened in other States and it could happen here as well.

As to identifying information of children on the register, we have their full names, dates of birth and addresses. When we asked the minister why the address was necessary, she said it was to differentiate between children who may have the same full names and dates of birth. I do not know how many children would fall into that category, but I think the number would be small. Indeed, the number of children not only in that category but also on the register would probably be one in one hundred million.

The minister should go to her advisers, the manager and staff and ask whether the deletion of addresses from the information about children in the register would compromise its functioning. I understand from some brief discussions with people involved in this area that it would not. That one simple point would be of great relief to some of the groups which are concerned about this matter, because if the address of a child is not included on the register, the location of that child by a potential abuser would be all the more difficult. It would be worthwhile for the minister to consider accepting an amendment, if such an amendment is brought forward, or proposing her own amendment along those lines when the legislation goes to the upper House.

There is a catalogue of concerns that remain unresolved with respect to this proposed register. The real problem in the area of child protection, according to the information I have, is in relation to people who abuse and who are likely to re-offend and be repeat abusers. This register does nothing to address that problem. The justification for the register is that it will simplify and facilitate the operations of departments dealing with children at risk. That is a commendable and laudable objective. However, none of the propositions or arguments put forward by the Government has demonstrated exactly how that will be achieved. It is one thing to say that this legislation will prevent children falling through the cracks, as it has been termed; it is another thing to say that this legislation will help government coordinate services to children who have been abused. It has not been demonstrated how that will take place. The only reference cited was the Daniel Valerio case in Victoria. If this register had been in existence in Victoria at the time of that case, I do not know whether it would have prevented the tragic outcome; I doubt that it would have.

The very basis for the existence of this register has not been completely justified. The Government may have been better served by considering how it could provide a register or a tracking information service, which was available to departmental officers, of people who abuse children. It is rather unfortunate that we have had a debate focused at the wrong end of the behavioural spectrum.

The member for Mandurah tried to convert this legislation into a register of abusers. However, the nature of the legislation and his amendments made that unacceptable to members on this side of the House, because the proposition that he was supporting really should come forward as stand-alone legislation and should not be instituted by way of amendment to another piece of amending legislation.

The Opposition, the Independents and the member for Mandurah have raised some considerable and genuine concerns about the usefulness and desirability of the legislation and the proposed register. Before this legislation reaches the upper House the minister has a responsibility to consider the concerns that have been raised. If it goes to the upper House in its current format, there may well be some difficulties in its transition.

Finally, I briefly deal with the way the legislation has been handled. It is unfortunate so many problems have arisen in that regard and I do not hold the minister entirely to blame for that. However, she is a member of the governing party, and it would have been preferable to arrive at some resolution of the internal conflicts in the Liberal Party over this legislation before it was debated in the Chamber. Nevertheless, I suppose that is the nature of parliamentary democracy. It has probably been a useful learning exercise for the minister.

I ask the minister to genuinely consider some of the propositions put on the legislation's shortcomings. Comments were made with genuine intent. This is not a party political matter. Nothing is gained philosophically by members like me

adopting a party political approach in raising objections to such legislation. We must try to come to grips with the concerns raised with me by parent organisations about the construction and utilisation of a register of this nature. People want these genuine concerns addressed seriously, which I hope can be done before the legislation reaches the other place.

MR PENDAL (South Perth) [3.11 pm]: I will be mercifully brief. Most of the points I wanted placed on the record were recorded in the course of a justifiably long committee process. I express regret at the outcome of my amendment; however, I do not intend to raise the ruling on that amendment as I know you, Mr Acting Speaker, would correctly rule that such comment would be canvassing the Deputy Chairman's ruling. I will not go down that path.

I use the third reading for a couple of minutes to remind the Government that the problem I have raised will not go away. A Government must address the broad picture - not just inclusion on the register - which relates to that data which the department uses agency-to-agency to track down and ultimately bring to justice people who are in some way or other mistreating children. The practices which are currently in vogue, I submit, are evil. One cannot protect one person or enhance one person's rights by diminishing the rights of another person. Everyone in this Chamber is committed to the notion of bringing to justice people who mistreat children. However, it denies every principle that our society regards highly to do that at the expense of the rights of ordinary people in the way that I have outlined in this debate.

I repeat what I said in the course of the second reading debate: The department has taken on a role which we exclusively reserve for the courts, which are established by us to determine guilt or, in the absence of evidence, to release a person with a verdict of not guilty. Unjust practices are making life a nightmare for people who come to the attention of the department. In the course of Tuesday's debate, I raised the last in a series of complaints which have come my way. This complaint was from a person I call Jack who lives in Victoria Park. His employer received a letter from the department under Julie Fitzgerald's signature in December of last year to say that charges against Jack had been substantiated; that is, complaints of child abuse. This letter had not been sent as a result of a release signed by Jack. The letter simply went from the department stating to the employer that the complaints had been substantiated.

In the course of that debate, the minister commented a little later to give me some reassurance that, yes, the situation was wrong and it had been rectified. However, if it has been rectified, Jack is not aware of it. He telephoned my office as late as last night to find out what was going on regarding his position. He is as mystified about that claim as I am. This morning I dictated a letter to the minister. I want to explore further how the minister can be in a position to give me assurances that the action was wrong and that some efforts have been made to rectify the matter when, according to my information, no rectification of it had occurred at all.

Finally, what is my solution to this very serious problem of knowing where one draws the line between the desire of Parliament to protect innocent children, and its desire to protect other people from unfair and unsubstantiated complaints and allegations? To be honest, right at this moment I do not know the answer to that serious question. I can understand the frustration of the investigators and social workers who, in their minds at least, have knowledge of a person's complicity in illegal acts against children. Therein lies my point. If we do not know at the moment where to draw the line, and genuinely do not know how to respond, we certainly should not be allowing a departmental practice which convicts people without a trial. That is the thesis I put to Parliament. I am no cleverer than anyone else on this matter and I do not have the solution. However, in the absence of knowing precisely what to do, of this I am certain: We should never put Parliament's imprimatur on a departmental action which allows investigations to be made, followed by decisions made in secret, when the normal procedure at law is not apparent, and by which a person is "convicted". It amounts to that result.

I remind the House of what I have said pretty well ad nauseam: When I sought an understanding of what "substantiation" means in these circumstances, Parliament was treated with contempt. We were given a document out of the departmental case practice manual of the department with 49 pages of protocol blocked out. I find that offensive as it is treating legislators with contempt. I am not at all impressed by the argument that the department needs to keep these protocols secret. That is what the Stalinists said. That is what totalitarian regimes say; they do not trust the public enough to bring them into the equation or to bring them to a state of knowledge and instruction. Therefore, the knowledge is kept from the people in the first place. In the end, the contempt is on not only the Parliament, but also the people of Western Australia. In this Chamber, 57 members were effectively being asked to make decisions in the dark, against a background of information withheld when the minister believed she was doing the right thing. When she tabled the document, she said that she thought the member for South Perth would be satisfied with that action. Of course, I was not satisfied because 49 pages of the document were blocked out.

This matter will haunt the Government because it is prepared to tolerate a departmental protocol that permits people to be tried and convicted in secret, and without the normal procedures available to them. That amendment was ruled as being beyond the scope of the Bill, and that, temporarily, in the parliamentary sense, got the Government off the hook. However, it is temporary because it paves the way for many other injustices to occur. Earlier in the debate, when I was sticking up for these five or six people, I was asked how I knew one or other of them was not a Phillip Bell. I said that I did not know but that I took people on trust. Since that name has entered the debate, it would be interesting for members to think about what has happened with respect to that name. A judge in New South Wales was arrested, charged and taken to trial because his name is Phillip Bell and he was mixed up with that other person. The charges against the judge were dismissed because the judicial officer - it could have been another judge or a magistrate - believed the person laying the complaint had confused Judge Bell with the other fellow who was a known and convicted paedophile. If it is possible for people to make such a wrong decision in one jurisdiction in Australia, members should think about the penalty paid by that judge in New South Wales. It was a very high penalty, and I suggest it will take a long time for his life to return to normal after the trauma of having been wrongly accused. Not only was he wrongly accused, but also he was the victim of poor procedures.

That is the very point I am complaining about in this place. In his case the poor procedures were that the police jumped in and, without reference to the Director of Public Prosecutions in New South Wales, charged the judge. Later it was conceded that had the case gone through the painstaking process involving the DPP, the judge would probably never have been charged. That man was dragged through the mire because he has the same first and second names as the offender. He has a different middle name; there is about 20 years difference in their ages; and he has a different physical appearance. Once the judicial officer could draw those distinctions, an acquittal was in process.

This Bill will pass through the House and I do not know what will happen to it in the other place. However, I earnestly request the Government to take on board the comments that have been made in the course of this debate, not those about the register or the inclusion on that register of the names of convicted people, which I support, but those about the departmental protocols, which allow people to be tried and convicted in secret, and knowledge of which is denied to this Parliament.

MR NICHOLLS (Mandurah) [3.25 pm]: I shall sum up my views and reflect on the debate on the Bill before the House. It is no surprise to anybody that I do not support the minister's views on this Bill. On a number of occasions we have disagreed, and I would like to think that in future changes will be made to the legislation that will go some way to resolving some of those disagreements.

I need to clearly state for the record that the register in its current form will not fulfil the basic necessities of such a process. In my view, the details that are kept with respect to victims of substantiated cases of child maltreatment should be limited to their name, address, gender, date of birth, case reference number and the officer who dealt with the allegation. I very strongly believe that if there is to be a register that records child maltreatment, or a child protection register, the name of the alleged offender should be recorded. Although the member for South Perth will vehemently disagree with me, I must stress that the vital component is that the register be absolutely confidential. It should not be confidential on the basis that a limited number of people will have access to it, or that people will be allowed to check that the details are correct, or that others will be able to inspect information relating to them on the register. Such a register should be absolutely confidential. Although this may sound like an oxymoron, I concur with the member for South Perth that people who have not been found guilty of an offence should not be assumed to be guilty simply because their name is contained on a file or within information that the Government holds. I have had difficulty in this debate expressing that view without being seen as one who wishes to exploit a provision within the Child Welfare Act that allows people to be identified as supposedly guilty, even though they have not been found guilty.

On the other side of the equation, I am extremely concerned at the situation in Western Australia whereby adults, in the main, are exploiting and harming children but are not going through the court process, simply because the Police Department, or another agency, is not able to obtain sufficient evidence to obtain a conviction. The difficulty I have is that a substantial number of people who are responsible for harming children fall into the grey area between those who are not guilty and those who are convicted. Some people within our society are responsible and are a threat to children. It is my view that the Government and members of the wider community should be taking all steps possible to prevent those people from harming children in the future. However, the real dilemma is how to identify those people who potentially may harm children, and how to protect the innocent people who may be wrongly identified as potential offenders. The last ingredient which is required for a register of this kind is an accountability process that ensures that whatever information goes on the register is absolutely accurate wherever possible, and that there is absolute minimal access, in fact I believe no access, to the names with the exception that the only information which could be obtained from such a register would be the case file reference number and the agency which is responsible for the substantiated allegation. That is the only information which should be able to be obtained from such a register and only to be obtained when the name of either an alleged victim or a perpetrator is matched when those names are submitted into the register. This legislation does not reflect that. This legislation creates a situation whereby a database collates information from various agencies. A number of different people can access the information, albeit the minister will say this is a confidential register; I am far from convinced. I am extremely worried that a person whose name will go on the register will somehow be stigmatised. The real question in my mind is that if we are to have such an open register and not hold the name of the alleged offender, and if we are not going to provide a strict regime of information on the register, why have a register in the first place? The dilemma I face is that I support the register concept, but I question whether this legislation will allow us to provide a register which is any more effective than a collation of information held by the department in its own computer database.

However, I recognise that we operate within a democracy and the majority effectively determine what will be the final decision. I have taken the opportunity to move a number of amendments. I also appreciate the opportunity to have debated them at length and I accept that at the end of that opportunity on many occasions I was unable to convince any other member of the House to support those amendments. Therefore, I accept without any grievance at this stage that through this opportunity I have not been able to convince members of this House of the merits of my amendments. I also understand that when a debate such as this takes place, a number of different attitudes of organisations within the community will be expressed based on their own experience or based on what they perceive to be the outcome should the Bill succeed or should an amendment succeed. A number of organisations and a number of individuals have expressed concern. It is my view that some of their concerns are worth noting. I definitely believe that some concerns are valid and based on realistic issues. However, it will take a number of years before anyone will be able to reflect on the operation of the register and make a judgment about whether those concerns were realistic or whether they have simply been raised without foundation.

I bring to the attention of the House my disappointment at the way in which the debate occurred. I understand the limitations on the time of the House. However, it has been extremely difficult for members, and particularly the minister, to manage the debate of a Bill that has been brought on in chunks of months as opposed to a continuum of days. That has also made it extremely difficult for the community to follow. I record my strong objection to a process that fragments debate on

legislation over many months. It makes a mockery of the process, especially when we are debating a serious issue such as this and when the complexity of some of the debate means that the community will have difficulty understanding exactly what the debate is about and the potential impact of legislation. There is no better example than that which I found when I moved amendments which referred to debates that we had had many weeks before and I looked around the Chamber at the puzzled expression on some member's faces as they were trying to work out the impact of the amendment and how it fitted into the current debate. I have no doubt that the minister also would have found it extremely difficult to continue her line of debate and her explanations when such long breaks occurred between the debates. I do not believe that the fruitful operation of this House is enhanced if we bring on debates in chunks of a couple of hours a month, particularly if they are complex and controversial. I do not believe the Westminster system was designed to handle legislation in that way and I do not believe that it is in the best interests of this House or Western Australia.

The other comment I raise is one that I direct to the Opposition. I note that the Opposition firmly opposes the Bill. However, I was disappointed that it did not move any amendments to the Bill. I know that the shadow spokesperson was dumped in the deep end and that is a difficult situation for anyone to be in. I would like to think that the Opposition will seriously consider the deficiencies in the legislation which have been highlighted by its members, other members and me when the Bill goes to the other place and moves amendments to enhance it and make it a reality. The other alternative is that the Opposition will vote against the Bill without attempting to amend it. If that alternative receives the support of the minor parties, the Bill will be defeated. If the Opposition does not put forward amendments and the minor parties support the Government's Bill, the Bill will go through unamended. I do not see that as the best result. That is only because I do not support the current form of the Bill. I strongly urge the Opposition to take a stand, put forward amendments and seek constructively to alter the Bill so that we arrive at the best possible legislation that we can get through both Houses rather than simply allow the Bill to pass in its current form because the Opposition decided to oppose it and put forward no amendments or, alternatively, allow the Bill to drop out of the system because of a lack of support for it in the other place.

Mr Carpenter: The Opposition's position is to oppose it.

Mr NICHOLLS: If the Opposition takes the same stance in the other place, the only logical outcome will be that the Bill will be killed. If that is the plan, so be it. If the Labor Party in the other place does not have the support of the minor parties, the Bill will be passed in its current form. I am worried about there being two extremes - that is, that we get everything or nothing and that there is no constructive review or opportunity to amend as we go through the process.

The member for South Perth raised several issues. I am concerned that some of those issues were not properly addressed. I like to think that the minister or her department will try to address some of those issues, not on the basis of trying to appease the member for South Perth - far be it from me ever to think that she may do that - but to -

Mr Pandal: That is a noble objective, all the same.

Mr NICHOLLS: When it appears that clear injustices have taken place, I would like the problems to be rectified. We should not simply say that it is just bureaucracy, that is the way it happens or that that is how it must be. I like to think also that the minister will seriously consider providing to the House the information regarding the manual that the member for South Perth required to demonstrate the processes that allow Family and Children's Services staff to conclude whether a case is substantiated. I find myself caught between my understanding of the process that officers of the department can go through to make their determination and the feeling that that is not my role and that the minister or the department should do it on an official basis.

The member for South Perth raised issues that I believe are supported by the wider public. There are real concerns about how people will be determined as being alleged offenders or substantiated as being alleged offenders without having the chance to be heard. There is the view in the community that in some circumstances the department operates in secrecy. I bring to the minister's attention, if she is not aware of it, that on one occasion I tried desperately to introduce a process whereby child protection workers would audio-tape their interviews with alleged offenders or people who were alleged to have committed offences. However, that initiative was stymied not because members of Family and Children's Services opposed it but because members of the Police Service opposed the audio-taping of such interviews. The general public is not aware of that, but I highlight it to inform the member for South Perth that I am very aware that Family and Children's Services staff are not plotting and conspiring to try to denigrate or victimise people in the community based on their own ideological bent, but they are often placed in a difficult situation to make a determination. No member would envy them or wish ever to be placed in that position. However, it is important to say that their case - that is, staff of Family and Children's Services - is not enhanced when a procedural manual is tabled in the House with a substantial amount of information blacked out. I urge the minister to do all within her power to provide information that actually shows that the process is not only fair and accountable, but also not secret, that the department is not afraid to be accountable to the House and that staff of the department are accountable for their professional conduct. I stress that in such circumstances it is not unusual for a decision to be made that later may be found to be incorrect or not totally correct. There is a need to ensure that corrective processes are in place to rectify that.

I will not support the legislation at the third reading stage. I have not supported the Bill through its phases, not because I do not believe there should be a register but simply because I do not believe the Bill reflects a register that I could support. I appreciate the minister's agreement in respect of inserting a provision for an annual report. I appreciate also the opportunities to debate with the minister the merits of the changes. I understand the minister's difficult position. Although I strongly believe my view is correct, the minister holds a different view as adamantly or as strongly.

I urge members to take an active interest in the outcome of the Bill. Although it is a difficult Bill to debate and although I understand that many members fear that the debate has gone on too long and may have wished that it had ended many

months ago, the Bill has potential either to be extremely positive in its function or to create several problems within the community, particularly among families who feel aggrieved that their children's names are on the register or that their personal information is provided to people who they do not believe should have it. I also have serious reservations about the appeal process through the courts. Yesterday the member for Joondalup highlighted the view that natural justice, or at least people's ability to access information, is a vital part of our current system. The potential for court cases in respect of access to information could cause significant problems. My real concern is that many people who come under the focus of the Department of Family and Children's Services often do not have the financial means to seek legal counsel to be properly represented in court and to achieve what we have termed in this debate many times "natural justice". Therefore, I am concerned that process will not be equitable for all.

The major ground of opposition to a register that contains the names of children who have allegedly been abused, and the name of the alleged offender is natural justice for the offender. Although I share the views of the member for South Perth that we must protect the innocent, I cannot agree with a policy that will allow a dozen children to be abused rather than an alleged offender to be incorrectly identified. That is my personal dilemma.

I had the privilege of being the Minister for Family and Children's Services for a short period. One of the outcomes was that I also had the opportunity to view a number of the files pertaining to children who were abused. I am not referring to allegations that were substantiated on very little evidence or about assertions that were made that could have been vexatious. I am referring to genuine harm that causes long-term damage to children. I cannot stand in this place today and say that I am prepared to support the view that we cannot afford to identify alleged offenders because they have not been convicted in court while children in our community will continue to be abused until sufficient evidence is collated to charge those people and to find them guilty. Unfortunately some people in our community premeditate to abuse children as a result of habitual behaviour, being under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, an inability to control their anger or they are simply perverted.

This register will do nothing to identify and assist the apprehension of those people. It will do nothing to protect children from those people who have not been abusers previously. It will do little to further enhance the child protection service in this State that could not have been done by collating this information within the current structure of Family and Children's Services. However, major advances have been made with the protocols the minister has developed. Cooperation between departments is vital and did not exist certainly during my time as minister. If nothing other than cooperation results from this debate we have made a step forward. Unfortunately my conscience does not allow me to vote for this legislation on the basis that I have not been able to succeed with my amendments; therefore, I will vote with the masses!

MRS PARKER (Ballajura - Minister for Family and Children's Services) [3.54 pm]: I will conclude what amounts to almost 20 hours of debate on extremely important, sensitive and critical legislation. However, I will not revisit all the issues raised in those 20 hours. At all stages of this debate I have sought to give the opportunity for as much examination of the issues as possible, hence the time that we have taken to progress the Bill. It has been a difficult debate and I thank members for their contributions. In his closing comments the member for Mandurah said that if the only thing that is achieved by this Bill is better coordination between agencies either directly or indirectly involved with the provision of services to children who have been harmed by abuse, it will have achieved something. That is exactly the purpose of this Bill. Through legislation, members in this place would like to achieve other things. I have some sympathy with that. We all want to better trace repeat activities by offenders against children. The member for Willagee indicated how desirable it would be if this legislation could achieve more in dealing with the activities of convicted offenders.

Mr Carpenter: I did not say convicted offenders.

Mrs PARKER: Sorry - alleged offenders. That is an important task and one that deserves merit. However, the purpose of this legislation was exactly that which was identified by the member for Mandurah. The worst known examples of cases that have gone wrong in any jurisdiction's response to cases of child abuse have occurred because of the failure of government departments to work together. Although I agree that this Bill does not do all the things that are important, particularly regarding offenders, the stated purpose of this legislation was to compile a framework by which agencies directly or indirectly involved in child protection were set up to coordinate their services to victims of child abuse. The register will also increase the level of accountability whereby we will know whether the agencies have delivered the services and followed through with the appropriate commitments to children, and that is important.

The member for Willagee said that the Opposition's view was consistent throughout this debate. I disagree with that. It is important to note that the then shadow spokesperson, the member for Kalgoorlie, initially gave support to this Bill but that support was withdrawn. I question the integrity and the reasons that it was withdrawn.

Mr Carpenter: Come on.

Mrs PARKER: In the same way as I have attempted to respond to the issues raised by the member for Willagee, I challenge members of the Opposition and remind them that they must seriously consider how they vote on this Bill when it reaches the other place. As the member for Mandurah said, with one exception, the Opposition did not support his amendments. Only one division was held in almost 20 hours of debate. The Opposition has not moved any of its own amendments.

Mr Carpenter: Minister, I will say this very slowly: We oppose the legislation and we have had 20 hours of debate to explain to you why. I suggested to you some possible amendments that might improve the situation. Why should we amend the legislation if we have made it clear right from the beginning that we oppose it?

Mrs PARKER: We have had 20 hours to debate this matter and it has been a difficult debate. We have taken on board a couple of amendments suggested by the member for Mandurah.

Mr Carpenter: We supported your amendment on penalties.

Mrs PARKER: That is right. It has been an interesting debate.

The member for South Perth raised important issues early in the debate. We had strong agreement on the issue raised by the member for Mandurah's amendment on the recording of alleged offenders' names, which argument was founded in the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness. I trust that the member for South Perth understands the proximity of views that we have on those matters; they are very much in accordance. The matters that he raised in the latter part of the debate did not refer to the register because we are including only the names of convicted offenders. However, I take on board the matters raised by the member for South Perth.

As we continue to move towards better safety screening of the people who will be employed in the daily care and contact with young children it is important to balance that screening with an improvement in the procedures and precautions in place to ensure that natural justice is preserved. I said previously that Western Australia is chairing a national working party on these issues and, from feedback I have had recently on the planning of the paper for the ministerial council, there is a determination by the people on that working party and my national ministerial colleagues to address the issue of how far to go without getting that balance out of kilter.

I thank the members for their contributions. I have taken on board the matters which I believe will improve the register. I accept some of the comments made by the member for Willagee in his contribution to the third reading and will continue to consider those points. However, I believe this is critical and important legislation. It will enable the Government and its agencies to improve the way we respond to children who desperately need such a system of cooperation in place when harm has been done. Those children deserve the best of our considerations. I make no apology for the amount of time that this debate has taken. I have been prepared for it to take all due attention because our children deserve that much from us. I am convinced that the legislation will improve the coordination of services from government agencies involved directly or indirectly with the delivery of services to children who have been harmed; it will improve the accountability of those agencies. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

PARKS AND RESERVES AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 15 October 1998.

MR McGOWAN (Rockingham) [4.08 pm]: I will make some initial remarks in relation to this Bill on behalf of the Opposition. I understand my colleague the member for Nollamara will also speak and I expect we will go into committee to discuss some of the clauses of the Bill, depending on the minister's response.

On its face this Bill looks straightforward. It will enable the Parks and Reserves Act to be used to appoint boards to oversee some reserves not created by the Land Administration Act. It is riveting stuff, Madam Acting Speaker (Ms McHale). At the present time reserves are created by the Land Administration Act. That is the successor to the Land Act of 1933 which we debated two years ago and about which the minister had no idea. However, we passed the Bill based upon his assurances that it would be an improvement to the law.

Mr Shave: Don't you think you have been rude enough to me during the past couple of days?

Mr McGOWAN: I just thought I would state a historical fact that the minister did not know anything about the Bill at the time but we will see if he knows something about this Bill.

In the minister's second reading speech he indicated that in some situations reserves were created outside the Land Administration Act. His speech did not mention which situations but it indicated that it would be a good move in the interests of public administration and smooth administrative work for the appointment of those boards to be conducted under the Parks and Reserves Act. I am ready to believe the minister that is the case and that it would enhance government in this State markedly if we were to allow that to take place. However, in his speech he does not indicate where the problems lie. We will seek to tease that out of the minister when we get to the committee stage.

The minister's second reading speech says that at present the Kings Park Board, for instance, or the Recreation Camp and Reserves Board can be appointed under the Parks and Reserves Act. He indicates that it would be a great improvement if other boards relating to similar reserves were able to be appointed under that Act. As I said, I am willing to believe the minister if he can provide evidence of the type of reserves to which he refers.

I have some questions to put to the minister in the committee stage but I will let him know now what they are. My first concern is: Is it a simpler procedure to appoint a board under the Parks and Reserves Act than under other procedures outside that Act? What is the procedure under those other Acts? Why is it an improvement in public administration to be able to appoint those boards under this Bill? My second concern relates to the public scrutiny of the appointments to boards controlling reserves or lands. Shortly after I entered this place, about two years ago, there was some notoriety involved in the minister's proposed appointment of his friend Hon Phil Lockyer to the Pastoral Lands Board.

Mr Shave: You made that accusation.

Mr McGOWAN: The Opposition frightened the minister out of doing that when he indicated that it would have been a very

good appointment. I am sure Hon Phil Lockyer thought he had a job lined up until his appointment fell through somewhere along the way.

Mr Shave: Your comments show you think you shocked me out of doing that.

Mr McGOWAN: One can conclude only that the Opposition frightened the minister on that matter. The Government had been through an orgy of appointing ex-Liberal Party politicians to public positions. No doubt the minister was terrified of what might happen. The minister ensured that another person was appointed to the East Perth Redevelopment Authority when his career in Parliament was cut short prematurely. The minister did that as an apology to the Liberal Party members who had supported that person in his area. These appointments have been made in the past and they have met with extreme public disquiet. The appointment of the Agent General to London was a disgraceful episode because of the capacity of the person who took on that position and the farcical nature of his departure from this place. I would not like to see that repeated.

Mr Carpenter: He was impersonating a member of Parliament.

Mr McGOWAN: Yes, he came in here pretending to be to be a member of Parliament. Some people said he did that for about 20 years. He pretended to represent the people of the South Metropolitan Region although we did not see him for about 15 years of that time. The one time I did see him was at a function in my electorate sponsored by AlintaGas which he opened by saying he would like to thank Atlantic gas for its sponsorship of the event. His grasp of reality was slightly off and I want to ensure that this minister -

Mr Shave: If you followed his political record, you would find he got a higher political -

Point of Order

Mr BLOFFWITCH: I ask that you, Madam Acting Speaker, take care that we do not reflect adversely on a member from the other House.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (Ms McHale): We are not doing that, so there is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Mr McGOWAN: I thought the Atlantic gas comment was very relevant because it reflects on the sort of people this Government appoints to these public positions. The minister was interjecting on me but I did not catch his interjection because of the point of order.

Mr Shave: I was saying that if you followed his distinguished political career, you would know that when it came to the ballot box he always got a higher personal vote in his electorate compared to the members sitting in the lower House. I thought that with you knowing that, if you did not before, you would understand that he was very highly regarded by the public and they supported him accordingly.

Mr McGOWAN: I find that very difficult to understand.

Mr Carpenter: I wonder what they thought when he took the money and ran.

Mr McGOWAN: He took his superannuation and at the same time took on an equally well paid job in the United Kingdom on the public purse. I hope the minister understands the point I am trying to make: The appointments he will have the capacity to influence under this Bill require a proper degree of scrutiny. I would like to know what sort of public scrutiny there will be of these appointments.

Also, what types of reserves are created by Acts other than the Land Administration Act? That point is not covered in this Bill. I would like the minister to detail those matters and tell the House why it is better to appoint boards under this Act. I would like him to describe the process under other Acts. The Rottnest Island Authority is excluded from the head Act, the Parks and Reserves Act. I am sure that exclusion was debated at length when it took place in 1987, but has anything else been excluded? I have received information suggesting that this Bill has something to do with Solidarity Park across the road from Parliament House. If the Government intends this Bill to impact on Solidarity Park - there was no mention of it in the second reading speech or any of the notes I have received - the minister should tell the House. If that is the Government's intention, the Opposition may not support the Bill. I have heard that the Government is trying to influence the future of that piece of real estate with this Bill. If the Government is not trying to do that, I would appreciate the minister letting the House know. I will address this matter in the committee stage but the Government's intentions for that park are relevant to Opposition support for the Bill. The park has a short but important history. The minister should make it clear to the House if the Government has any designs on Solidarity Park or any hidden agenda in this Bill. Naturally I will believe the minister if he is recorded in *Hansard* as saying that the Government does not have such an agenda but the Opposition would like to know the truth of the matter. Do these amendments have the capacity to affect that park and will the Government use them to do that?

MR KOBELKE (Nollamara) [4.18 pm]: The minister's second reading speech is brief and, if taken at face value, this Bill is clearly one the Opposition would wish to support. However, with the help of the minister I wish to gain a better understanding of the full intent of the Bill and whether it will impact directly or indirectly on actions the Government may wish to take concerning Solidarity Park across the road from Parliament House.

I commence by congratulating the minister, as well as the Department of Land Administration, which probably did a great deal of work in preparing this amending Bill, because this is one of the few Bills which have had a blue copy of the principal

Act with the amendments included in italicised form so that we can quickly understand the impact of the amendments being made. I sincerely thank the minister and his department for providing that extra service to this House. It makes the debate easier and ensures that we are able to deal with the issues involved and properly scrutinise the legislation the Government has brought forward. I hope some of the minister's colleagues will follow his example and ensure that when legislation comes before the House we have a copy of the Act as a blue copy, if necessary, with amendments included in an annotated form.

The title of the Act will be changed in a major way. We are amending the Parks and Reserves Act 1895. The title of that Act currently is "An Act for the Management of Parks and Reserves vested in the Crown". If this legislation is put in place, it will become an Act for the control of land reserved to the Crown. Therefore, we do not need to talk about parks and reserves in the context of the new Act. The Act will still be called the Parks and Reserves Act, but that terminology will not be used; instead, we will talk about land. I wonder whether that has more effect than the minister stated in his second reading speech.

I turn to the main parts of the minister's second reading speech which outline the intent of the Bill. The minister explained that presently under the Parks and Reserves Act a board cannot be appointed to control and manage a reserve if it is not created under the Land Act. That means that there could be situations in which the Government wished to appoint a board to manage a particular reserve, but it does not have the legislative mechanism to do so. Therefore, it wishes to rectify that situation. That being the case, the Government has our full support.

The minister further said in his second reading speech -

... the Bill will enable the appointment of boards to manage reserves regardless of which Act of Parliament created them.

I see no problem with that, and I am happy to support it.

However, the structure of the principal Act is now to be changed by no longer requiring the board to relate to a reserve - or a park and reserve as it states in some places; it will simply relate to land. I refer to section 3 of the principal Act, because this relates only to the appointment of the board. However, I am assuming - the minister will correct me if I am wrong - that it has an effect on the whole Act, not just the appointment of the board, because the Act principally deals with the establishment of the board and the roles, responsibilities and powers of it. Therefore, I will work on the assumption that the key intent of the current Act rests on the establishment of that board.

That being the case, the minister, through the Governor, can form a board to control and manage land that is reserved under part 4 of the Land Administration Act. Therefore, it does not need to be a reserve. For the principal Act to apply, we are simply dealing with land which has been reserved under part 4 of the Land Administration Act. To try to get an understanding of what is covered by part 4 of the Land Administration Act, I explain that we are dealing with class A reserves; easements in class A reserves; land that may be reserved to a local government authority - I think that can be part of it - and there may be other different types of land holdings which can be considered to be reserved under part 4 of the Land Administration Act. In that case, does it mean, as a principal new activity which would be possible following the passing of this legislation, that bits of land from all over the place, which are not reserves in the current sense, could be taken and put under the control of a board, whether a new or existing board? If that is the case, the potential exists to do considerably more than simply establish boards, when that would be a right and proper thing to do, to look after a fairly holistic piece of land that should be managed by a board.

The minister may find it convenient, with the expansion of the Kings Park Board, that suddenly a piece of land south of the river should be managed by the Kings Park Board, and that could be transferred across. Alternatively, a general board that is established in one area could suddenly be given land in another area, simply as a management tool. If that prospect is being opened up, it is a different issue. I am not saying I would not support it, but it goes well beyond anything that the minister alluded to in his second reading speech.

That brings me to the concern raised by the member for Rockingham; that is, if that becomes possible under the Act as amended, the control of Solidarity Park, the piece of land across the road from Parliament House which is currently vested, in part, in the City of Perth, could be given to the Kings Park Board or some other properly established board. In that case, the powers and controls which are clearly provided to such a board under the Act could be applied to a piece of land which had previously been under the control of the City of Stirling. That may be good management, and in that case the Opposition may wish to support it. However, we would like to know whether the Bill opens up the possibility that these amending provisions could be used for specific purposes in relation to Solidarity Park.

I will not say much more, apart from briefly commenting on Solidarity Park. The Labor Party clearly supports the retention of Solidarity Park. It is an important part of our industrial and constitutional history. What occurred in this House and the other place during the passage of the third wave of industrial relations legislation was quite unprecedented, and it is now a part of our Parliament's history. Many members on the Government side would view those matters with great disdain. However, a more objective view is that it was the voice of the people speaking out against the passage of legislation which was totally against the will of the people and was being rushed through before the effects of a proper election could be seen in the Parliament.

What we have across the road is a fine facility, far superior to the sand patch that was there previously. It has been donated to the people of this State by the unions and community groups that erected it. We can discuss later whether it could be improved, varied or changed. However, its removal would be to the detriment of this State and this Parliament. One certainly would not want to see the Government using a back-door means to remove that part of our history and not allow

it to stand, not only as a monument to the struggle that took place at that time and the many workers who have been injured and killed in the past, but also as a local community facility that is regularly used by many different groups. I say no more about that matter. That may be an issue that will be debated at another time.

I place on record the Opposition's support for Solidarity Park and express the hope that there is no Trojan horse in this legislation which is aimed in any way to make it possible for the Government to take action with respect to Solidarity Park and for that action to be taken under a legislative power which currently does not exist but which may be provided by these amendments to the Parks and Reserves Act.

MR SHAVE (Alfred Cove - Minister for Lands) [4.29 pm]: I thank members for their comments and general support, subject to some concerns that they have. Before I comment on the issues, the member for Rockingham indicated that he desires to go into committee. Therefore, the technical aspects that he asked me to clarify and the technical aspects that the member for Nollamara raised are probably better answered during the committee stage.

In addition to the comments I made in my second reading speech, I will try to indicate why the Government is going down this path. The member for Rockingham asked why these amendments are required. My advice from the department is that the amendments are required on the grounds of the good management of the reserves. It is very important that sites are properly managed. The amendments will enable the creation of a board with regulatory powers to improve the day-to-day efficiency of reserves not created under the Land Act 1933. Anyone who knows the history of the Kings Park Board would understand that having that capacity to manage that land and having a board in place is a far better proposition than not having it. As to the question that the member for Rockingham asked, the answer my staff have given me is that boards cannot be appointed under the Acts. The Parks and Reserves Act is designed specifically to enable boards to be appointed to manage reserves. At present reserves not created by the Land Act cannot have boards appointed. This is an oversight rather than a deliberate plan. The advisers have further said that boards cannot be appointed under the Land Administration Act, which seems virtually a duplication of the first point.

The second question referred to the scrutinising of a board member. I have been given the answer that board members are appointed by the Government but those board members are appointed on the recommendations of the minister. Essentially the member for Rockingham asked how we have an assurance about the people appointed. I can state on the record that the Government's intention would be to appoint to these boards people who are principally involved in the administrative side within the department. With a board such as the Kings Park Board, if somebody had a conservation bent or an historical interest in Kings Park for a long time, obviously they would be recommended for that board. The Bill is not designed to create a situation in which people other than government people in the main are in control of the affairs of these sorts of reserves. The Bill involves a number of reserves in a number of different areas with a number of departments which will fall into the boards' management. I do not have the detail. It would be a very large task to research all of the legislation going back 70 years to determine the number of reserves that are actually affected.

Mr McGowan: You should know that information and it should be part of this.

Mr SHAVE: As I have already said to the member, the department has told me that to research all of the statutes to ascertain that information would be a mammoth job.

The member asked whether it was the intent to appoint public servants. I have covered that. The answer I have been given by the department is that public servants with a knowledge and expertise in the subject matter would be appointed. I asked what type of person is traditionally appointed to the Kings Park Board. The answer I received from the department was that someone would normally be nominated by the agency and any other person who might be interested or well versed in the area of parks and reserves could be appointed.

The member specifically raised the issue of the land on the other side of Harvest Terrace and the Government's attitude to it, and whether the Government would seek removal of the structures over there. The simple answer is that the Government already has the power to remove the structures under section 270 of the Land Administration Act. If the member feels that the Government has a hidden agenda, the Government already has the capacity to do that. The Government's hope would be that when the structure is removed, it can be done on a consensus basis. I say "hope" because it has always been an emotive issue. Some people have been saying that bulldozers will go in and that the structures will come down in seven days. That has never happened. The department has been discussing the possibility of the relocation to a suitable site of the memorial erected in recognition of Mark Allen, the young man who lost his life. The Minister for Labour Relations has also been involved in the negotiations. I have not confirmed that with the minister because I do not believe the issue is one that needs to be determined straightaway. It is not my view that the structures should come down straightaway; my view is that there will be a time when this Parliament will need to be redeveloped and the land over the road will be required as part of that redevelopment. In recognition of that young man, it would be desirable for that to be done on a cooperative rather than a confrontational basis. In some ways it is a disappointing that the memorial was placed there in the knowledge that it was an illegal act. However, because the parents and the relatives of that young man value the memorial, I hope that when the time comes for the redevelopment of that site, there is an arrangement between the Government and the family to relocate that memorial.

Mr McGowan: You must admit that it is a massive improvement to that piece of land over there. Why would you want to knock it down?

Mr SHAVE: I have given the member the reason. I could give the member another very good reason; that is, we could knock that structure over tomorrow because there is a shortage of parking around Parliament and the Constitutional Centre. Those structures may be desirable for people to sit near and have their lunch and so on, but the land could be used for

parking. The Government has not been provocative and knocked over the structures and I do not think that that will be required in this term of government.

Ms MacTiernan interjected.

Mr SHAVE: The member should not be rude. It could well happen in the next term of government.

Mr McGowan: We will not be doing it.

Mr SHAVE: That is right because you will not be the Government.

Ms MacTiernan: With the member for Alfred Cove as Premier we will be a shoo-in. You and Noel make a fantastic team. There is no doubt we will be in government.

Mr SHAVE: I have had some strong information that your friend Brian Burke is in full swing in the Labor Party.

Ms MacTiernan: We have not had Brian Burke sitting in the courtyard of Parliament House receiving each of the backbenchers in the Dougie faction and giving them their instructions.

Mr SHAVE: The member for Armadale should watch her position, because she is not on the right team in the Labor Party.

Mr McGowan: Your mate doesn't know much about what has been going on in the Labor Party if he is telling you that.

Mr SHAVE: That information came from a former Labor member of Parliament, so I thought it was pretty accurate. That will give the member for Armadale something to think about. This chap would know.

Ms MacTiernan: What did he tell you?

Mr SHAVE: He gave me the advice and I am passing it on to the member for Armadale. Because I get on so well with the member for Armadale I am letting her know she should watch out. I think I have covered the issues that were raised.

Mr Kobelke: No. What might happen to Solidarity Park across the road and what is the most appropriate monument for Mark Allen are issues that should be debated. Those issues bear little relevance to this Bill other than the head of power. The minister said that the Government already has the power to take action with respect to those structures if it wishes. That does not answer my question about whether these amendments provide an alternative or different head of power for the Government to remove the structures in Solidarity Park.

Mr SHAVE: Perhaps we can deal with that during committee.

Mr Kobelke: Can the minister answer my other question on whether the Bill provides powers to give control of isolated pieces of land to a board?

Mr SHAVE: We can address that during the committee stage. I do not think I can make any further comments prior to the committee stage except to say that at this point it is not the Government's intention to immediately remove any of the structures on the site over the road. However, there will be a time in the future when the Government of the day will develop that site. All of the site, some of it or none of it could be redeveloped. I cannot give any undertaking as it will be done by future Governments.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

Committee

The Deputy Chairman of Committees (Ms McHale) in the Chair; Mr Shave (Minister for Lands) in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1: Short title -

Mr KOBELKE: The short title may be an appropriate time to seek a response to the question I raised in the second reading debate. Perhaps I can tie that to the change in the long title of the Bill which goes from being an Act for the management of parks and reserves vested in the Crown to an Act for control and management of certain lands reserved to the Crown. Given the move away from parks and reserves to land, and accepting that this amending Bill will give the minister power to establish boards for bits of land over which he currently does not have power, does it also provide the power to take other pieces of land - a large variety and type of land holdings - as long as they are covered under part 4 of the Land Administration Act, and have those managed by a board? Will that be an additional administrative power which the minister has not referred to in the second reading speech?

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (Ms McHale): I will let the minister respond to the member's line of inquiry, but it would be more appropriate to address it in clause 4.

Mr SHAVE: I am happy to deal with it now.

The reason for the change is that the parliamentary draftsman thought it was a more appropriate drafting form. Clause 3(1) states that the Governor may appoint persons to form boards to control and manage land that is reserved under part 4 of the Land Administration Act or any other Act. The advice I have is that it does not change anything. It is not a matter of widening the powers to try to take in other land that was not previously covered under that Act. It still applies to reserves only.

Either the member for Rockingham or the member for Nollamara asked whether the Government could seize the land belonging to the City of Perth that is across the road from Parliament House. I understand that the City of Perth wanted to give the land to the Government. I do not think those negotiations have taken place. If we had wanted to get control of that land specifically to remove those structures, it would seem logical to have gone through that process. We have not done that.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 2 and 3 put and passed.

Clause 4: Long title amended -

Mr McGOWAN: I want the situation with the land across the road made crystal clear. The minister said that under section 273 of the Land Administration Act the Government has the capacity to go in there with bulldozers and knock the structures down if it wanted. Can the minister explain how this works under the legislation? Firstly, what is the process under the relevant section of the Land Administration Act for knocking down the structures at Solidarity Park? Secondly, does the Bill make it any simpler or provide an alternative method for doing that, or does it give the Government the opportunity to expedite the process in any way? Is there any accuracy to any of the stories being put around that this is the reason for the Bill coming into the Parliament?

Mr SHAVE: I told the member for Nollamara - I just want to clarify this - that I looked to an adviser at the back of the Chamber in regard to the land the City of Perth controls. I understand some land, by agreement, is being resumed along part of that reserve. I do not think it is that land on which Solidarity Park sits; it is further back from there. This is the indication being given by my adviser. I do not want it to be seen that I have inadvertently misled the Parliament. The advice I am being given now -

Mr McGowan: Resumed by whom?

Mr SHAVE: It will be resumed by the State. This strip of land goes along Parliament Place, up to Harvest Terrace. I can clarify that for the member later. It is being done. As I understand it, it is not the land on which those structures stand. From the indication I have been given, there are strips of land around the whole perimeter of the site, but not where the structures are. I could be wrong about that, but I do not think I am. With regard to the questions the member asked: There is a 90-day advertising period whereby under section 270 notice is given before the resumption takes place. That would give the advice that it will be resumed. All these boards have a set of by-laws. This board has not even been created, so it has no by-laws.

Mr McGowan: Which board is that?

Mr SHAVE: This is the board that will be set up to control any of these reserves. Until the board is set up, the regulations and the by-laws are not created.

Mr McGowan: Which reserves will they control?

Mr SHAVE: It will be whichever reserves for which one of those boards becomes applicable. If the member is talking about all the land across the road from Parliament House, the board that is set up to control that parcel of land would have separate by-laws. Until those by-laws are set up, I do not know what they will require. I do not know whether resumption can take place under the current process. The capacity of the board to resume will also be included in any by-laws that are set up. That would be natural. The Government would not set up a board knowing one day it might want to resume the land and not have the capacity to do that.

Mr McGOWAN: That is not the intent of this Bill, as far as I understand it. I just want to get it straight. I asked, firstly, what is the process under the current Land Administration Act; secondly, will the process be expedited or create an alternative process under this legislation to knock over the structures at Solidarity Park; and, thirdly, what is the source of the stories that are going around that that is the purpose of the Bill? The minister indicated that a board would be set up to administer the park over the road.

Mr Shave: Not for Solidarity Park; it will be set up for the management of all of that land, not just a small area of land. All those pieces of land form one site. The board would have control over the day-to-day running of that whole site from, say, Kings Park Road to Parliament Place and Havelock Street.

Mr McGOWAN: Is the minister saying a reserve will be created there under the Land Administration Act?

Mr Shave: A reserve is already there.

Mr McGOWAN: Will a board be created for the land?

Mr Shave: That's it.

Mr McGOWAN: I will add another question to the three I have already asked: Why is there a necessity for a board for that piece of land?

Mr Shave: It is not just particularly for that piece of land; it could be for a variety of pieces of land.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (Mr Osborne): The question is that clause 4 do stand as printed.

Mr Shave: The Government's experience -

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I remind the minister that it is proper for him to seek, and be awarded, the call to enable the proceedings of the Chamber to operate properly. That procedure also allows those who are recording the proceedings of the Chamber to operate effectively.

Mr SHAVE: Whether the board is set up to cover the land over the road is a decision the Government would make. In most cases where one of these pieces of land is not under the direct control of the Land Administration Act, such as with Kings Park, the Government's view is that appropriate boards should control those lands. That is why the Government is proceeding in the way it is. At this point it is probably appropriate that I move that the Chairman report progress and to sit again.

Progress reported.

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE

MR BARNETT (Cottesloe - Leader of the House) [4.59 pm]: I move -

That the House do now adjourn.

In adjourning the House, I advise members that it is the Government's intention that the whole of next week will be devoted to the budget debate, in which general speeches are made by members about the budget or their electorates. It will be necessary to conclude that debate next week because the estimates committees are scheduled for the following week. I foreshadow that we may well sit on Wednesday night of next week.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 4.59 pm

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Questions and answers are as supplied to Hansard.

TOURISM, FUNDING OF REGIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

1963. Mr BROWN to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Tourism:

How much was made available to each regional tourism association in the -

- (a) 1996-97 financial year;
- (b) 1997-98 financial year, and
- (c) 1998-99 financial year?

Mr BRADSHAW replied:

- (1) (a)-(c) By way of explanation, in 1996, the Western Australian Tourism Commission (WATC) undertook to review the Regional Tourism Policy 1994 - 1997, which provided guidelines for the allocation of funds directly to Regional Tourism Associations (RTAs) and country tourist bureaux (TBX). The outcome of the review was to replace the Policy with new fee for service based agreements with each of the State's 10 RTAs. The review was developed by the WATC and endorsed by the Regional Tourism Review Board (RTRB), a WATC sub-committee comprising representatives from RTAs, TBX, WATC, local government and private tourism operators and approved by the WATC Board of Commissioners. Under the terms of the agreement, each of the RTAs is required to deliver a number of services, including support for an appropriate level of visitor servicing. As visitor servicing is an integral part of regional marketing, a decision was made to make the RTAs responsible for decisions about the allocation of financial support to the TBX. This was considered appropriate given that one of the objectives of the shift from the old Policy was to increase the efficiency of the operation of regional tourism and eliminate duplication. Through the elimination of the duplication of activities between the WATC and RTAs an additional 35.5% in funds was available for allocation to the RTAs over a 3 year period. It was anticipated that similar efficiencies could be achieved by eliminating the duplication of activities between RTAs and TBX, particularly in the area of external marketing activity such as the production of brochures. The agreements have been in place in some regions for three years and are operating successfully, with greater coordination and commitment between the RTA and tourist bureaux.

REGION		1996/97 FUNDING	1997/98 FUNDING	1998/99 FUNDING
Kimberley		\$174,575	\$162,549	\$177,616
Pilbara		\$195,878	\$201,160	\$163,825
Gascoyne		\$117,449	\$122,272	\$127,244
Mid West		\$120,845	\$130,363	\$139,600
Heartlands	*	N/A	\$124,207	\$132,329
Goldfields	**	\$79,532	\$122,932	\$130,823
South East		N/A	\$67,203	\$118,155
Great Southern		\$138,380	\$140,555	\$151,649
South West		\$204,859	\$228,035	\$254,948
Peel	***	N/A	\$75,426	\$127,862
Midlands	*	\$3,464	N/A	N/A
Central South	*	\$17,164	N/A	N/A

NB: In 1996/97 all regions had the option to commence operating under the terms of the new funding agreements. Only five regions took up that option (Kimberley, Pilbara, Gascoyne, Mid west & Great Southern). This ready acceptance of the new funding direction is reflected in the overall financial allocations to these Associations.

* Prior to the existence of the Heartlands on July 1 1997, the wheatbelt was divided into two regions, which subsequently merged to form the Heartlands. These were the Midlands Regional Tourism Association and the Central South Travel Association.

** In the 1996/97 year the tourism body in the Goldfields region of the state was known as the Goldfields Esperance Travel Association. The allocation for 1996/97 covers that total region.

*** The Peel Tourism Association did not come into existence until July 1 1997.

TOURISM, INTERNATIONAL ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN

1984. Mr BROWN to the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for Tourism:

- (1) Is the Minister aware that the Australian Tourism Commission agreed, in a radio interview in January 1999, that its new international advertising campaign promotes Australia's knock about image?
- (2) Has the Government/Western Australian Tourism Commission had any involvement in developing the Australian Tourism Commission international advertising campaign?

- (3) If so, in what way?
- (4) If not, why not?
- (5) Will the Australian Tourism Commission International advertising campaign compliment the Western Australian advertising campaign?
- (6) If so, in what way?

Mr BRADSHAW replied:

- (1) Yes. The Australian Tourist Commission's (ATC) research had identified that the easy going, welcoming "Aussie" personality was Australia's most powerful tourism asset. The visitor wanted to meet real Australians – the knock-about "Aussie" - when they came here. It was in this context that the knock-about image was mentioned in the radio interview.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) The WATC has had ongoing involvement in the development and enhancement of Brand Australia from which the ATC's new international advertising campaign evolved.
- (4) Not applicable.
- (5) Yes.
- (6) Both campaigns are about capturing the essence of the destination in a very similar manner. The core personality traits of Brand WA (fresh, free, natural, spirited) and Brand Australian, naturally free spirited, reflect a relaxed, unpretentious lifestyle, natural attractions, magnificent food and wines and friendly people.

VISA CHARGE

2085. Mr BROWN to the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for Tourism:

- (1) Will the Minister confirm the State Government has made representations to the Federal Government to abolish the new \$50 visa charge?
- (2) What was the nature of the request made by the State Government to the Federal Government?
- (3) What was the nature of the response received from the Federal Government?
- (4) Has the State Government pointed out to the Federal Government that the visa charge will impact on tourism particularly at a time when difficulties are being encountered through the Asian economic crisis?
- (5) What further action does the Government intend to take to try and have the visa charge removed?

Mr BRADSHAW replied:

- (1) The State Government has not made any formal representation to the Federal Government to date in regard to the abolition of the \$50 visa charge.
- (2) Whilst the State Government has not yet made representation, it will be putting forward to the Federal Government that it expedite the availability of the Electronic Travel Authority (ETA) system into all of Australia's major source tourism markets. ETA issued visas are not subject to the \$50 impost.
- (3) Not applicable.
- (4) It is the view of the State Government and the tourism industry that visas in general are a deterrent for Australian tourism and the added impost of a \$50 fee for non ETA visas will only serve as an additional impediment to Australia's and therefore Western Australia's competitiveness in the global tourism market. The economic crisis in Asia has already had some impact in slowing growth of visitor numbers to WA from those markets. These markets are price sensitive in purchasing habits and an additional \$50 on the price of their holiday does have the potential to have an effect on the destination selection process. This will be pointed out to the Federal Government, however, as the visa charge is projected to raise about three times what it cost to implement, it is unlikely the Government will drop it. A better strategy is to influence the Federal Government to extend the number of countries that have access to the ETA system which negates the visa applicant having to pay the \$50 fee.
- (5) Rather than address the \$50 visa charge for non ETA users being removed, the State Government's further strategy will focus on expediting the availability of the ETA.

TOURISM, DOMESTIC

2086. Mr BROWN to the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for Tourism:

- (1) Has the Western Australian Tourism Commission joined with other State authorities on the Tourism Council Australia in forming an advisory committee, Partnership Australia Domestic aimed at increasing the number of Australians travelling at home?
- (2) Has the Western Australian Tourism Commission/State Government agreed to one and more initiatives through the advisory committee designed to increase Australian domestic tourism?

- (3) What initiatives have been agreed to by the Western Australian Tourism Commission/State Government in this regard?
- (4) What funds/resources will be allocated to implement these initiatives?

Mr BRADSHAW replied:

- (1) On approximately a quarterly basis, the Chief Executive Officers of each of the State Tourism Commissions meet to discuss high-level strategic issues impacting on Australian tourism. The issue of the Domestic Tourism Initiative (DTI) is a standing agenda item at these meetings. This group has also met with Tourism Council Australia (TCA) and the Tourism Task Force in respect to domestic marketing initiatives.
- (2) The CEO meetings have, in principle, endorsed a strategy for the Domestic Tourism Initiative. This initiative and an appropriate budget split amongst all of the States and Territories will be recommended by the Australian Standing Committee on Tourism to the next Tourism Ministers' Council meeting.
- (3) The key initiatives outlined in the Domestic Tourism Initiative are:

Regional Tourism Initiative
 Australian Holiday Database (including National Aboriginal Tourism Database).
 Research and Development Program
 New Market Development Program (Ethnic)
 Travel Industry Program
 Marketing Communications Campaign

- (4) The WATC Board of Commissioners has approved, subject to the Tourism Ministers' Council approval, and the satisfactory resolution of the details of the initiative, the following budget allocation to this project:

1999/2000	\$54,000
2000/2001	\$216,000
2001/2002	\$162,000

This allocation is based on a formula advised in principle by all Chief Executive Officers of each State's Tourism Commission, with the States contributing a total of \$4 million over three years. The funds are to be matched by \$8 million from the federal government and \$4 million from the industry.

TOURISM, DIVING FATALITY

2090. Mr BROWN to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Tourism:

- (1) Has the Government/Western Australian Tourism Commission undertaken a review of the Western Australia diving industry in light of the death of a Japanese tourist?
- (2) Who undertook the review?
- (3) When was the review undertaken?
- (4) Has the review been completed?
- (5) If not, when is it expected it will be completed?
- (6) If the review has been completed, have any recommendations been made?
- (7) What are the nature of the recommendations?

Mr BRADSHAW replied:

- (1) It has been publicly announced that a Ministerial Taskforce will be established to conduct an inquiry into underwater recreational diving in Western Australia. The Taskforce will comprise of representatives from appropriate Government agencies and suitable qualified persons identified by advertisement.
- (2)-(3) Not applicable.
- (4) No.
- (5) It is expected to be completed by the end of the 1999 calendar year.
- (6)-(7) Not applicable.

SYDNEY 2000 OLYMPICS, ACCLIMATISATION OF TEAMS

2096. Mr BROWN to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Tourism:

- (1) How many sports people/sporting teams are expected to travel to Australia for practice/acclimatisation as preparation for the "Sydney 2000" Olympics?
- (2) How many teams/sports people has the Government been able to attract to Western Australia?
- (3) What specific strategy has the Government adopted to encourage sporting teams to use Western Australian facilities in the lead up to the "Sydney 2000" Olympics?

- (4) Teams for what -
- (a) sports; and
 - (b) countries,
- are expected to visit Western Australia prior to the "Sydney 2000" Olympics?

Mr BRADSHAW replied:

- (1) The Sydney 2000 Olympics will play host to 10,200 athletes representing 198 countries in 28 sports. It is not possible to estimate the number of sports people or sporting teams that will travel to Australia to practice/acclimatise in preparation for the Games.
- (2) The WA Government, through Sport International WA, has had an involvement in attracting the following sporting teams to Perth since September 1998:
- Thai Olympic Equestrian Team
 - Singapore, Malaysian, New Zealand, Brunei Taekwondo Teams
 - Korean Men's Hockey Team
 - Japanese Men's Senior Water Polo Team
 - Hungarian Men's Water Polo Team
 - Finnish Swimming Team
 - Japanese Women's Junior Water Polo Team
 - Canadian Men's Water Polo Team
 - Great Britain Cycling Team
- (3) The Government, through Sport International WA, has targeted European, Asian and Indian Ocean Rim countries to attract sporting teams to use Western Australian facilities in the lead up to the Sydney 2000 Olympics. A specific strategy of staging a pre-Olympic 'Festival of Sport' has been used to attract overseas countries and this has been met with a great deal of enthusiasm.
- (4) Teams for the following sports and countries have confirmed or indicated their interest in visiting Perth for pre-Olympic training/acclimatising prior to the Sydney 2000 Olympics:
- | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|
| Basketball | - | Greece, Yugoslavia, Spain, Italy, Russia, Australia |
| Volleyball | - | Italy, Korea, Spain, Yugoslavia, Australia |
| Football (soccer) | - | Greece |
| Water Polo | - | Greece, Italy, Yugoslavia, Spain, Korea |
| Gymnastics | - | Greece, Spain |
| Cycling | - | Great Britain |
| Swimming | - | France, Greece |
| Hockey | - | Spain, Korea, Australia |

In addition to the above, the entire Greek Olympic team have confirmed that they will visit Perth in August/September 2000.

BELLTOWER, TOURIST ATTRACTION

2098. Mr BROWN to the Premier:

- (1) Is the proposed belltower being constructed primarily as a tourist attraction?
- (2) How many additional tourists does the Premier believe will be attracted to Western Australia/Perth once the belltower is constructed?

Mr COURT replied:

- (1) The bell tower is being constructed primarily to honour the commitment given to the Cities of London and Westminster by the previous Government on behalf of the people of Western Australia. While the bell tower is for the people of Western Australia to appreciate and enjoy, it will also be, by its very nature, a remarkable tourist attraction.
- (2) Experts inform us that there are around 50,000 bell ringers in the world, and over 80% of these live in the United Kingdom, one of our major sources of visitors. It is reasonable to expect substantial numbers of bell ringers to visit Western Australia over time because this is the largest set of change ringing bells in the world and one of the largest musical instruments in the world. Importantly, the bell tower will be an integral part of the overall Barrack Square Redevelopment which will (a) encourage those visitors already coming to extend their stay because the more attractions a destination has, the longer people are inclined to stay. Increased length of stay means increased visitor expenditure and that leads to more jobs, and (b) add a new experience for visitors which will be important in ensuring there is a high level of satisfaction when people visit Perth. It is essential that, as a tourism destination, our state continually invests in the development of tourism infrastructure and attractions in order to be competitive with our rival destinations.

The redevelopment of Barrack Square and the subsequent improved interaction between the City and the River will be a critical part of continually improving the appeal of Perth and subsequently the state as a Tourism destination. In order to reap the economic and employment benefits of tourism (approximately \$2.1 billion per annum and 75,000 jobs) we must continue to invest and this is part of that overall commitment. The bell tower will also add

a new dimension to the Perth skyline. The city skyline is one of the most common elements used in the promotion of Perth and the bell tower will be a remarkable architectural addition to an already famous vista.

TAXATION, WINE

2130. Mr BROWN to the Treasurer:

- (1) Is the Treasurer aware of an article that appeared in *The West Australian* on 24 February 1999 concerning the tax changes being sought by the Independent Wineries Association of Australia?
- (2) Is the Minister aware of the changes being sought by the Association?
- (3) If not, will the Minister examine those changes?
- (4) Will the Government make representations to the Federal Government in support of the changes being sought by the Association?
- (5) If so, when?
- (6) If not, why not?.

Mr COURT replied:

- (1) Yes. I note that the article indicates that the President of the Independent Wineries Association supports a change to a tax based on alcohol content (a "volumetric excise"), rather than the value of wine.
- (2)-(6) I have received representations from a number of Western Australian wine producers seeking similar changes, which should benefit producers of premium bottled wine, and bring the taxation of wine more into line with that of beer and spirits. In response, I indicated that I would be prepared to actively support a revenue neutral, across-the-board volumetric excise, if the Western Australian wine industry as a whole considered it to be in their interests.

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES, LEVEL ONE EMPLOYEES

2279. Mr RIEBELING to the Premier; Treasurer; Minister for Public Sector Management; Federal Affairs:

In relation to the employment status of Level One employees of the agencies falling within the Premier's responsibility -

- (a) what is the total number of Level One employees at each agency as at 9 March 1999; and
- (b) of these employees, how many were -
 - (i) permanent full time; and
 - (ii) on short term contract?

Mr COURT replied:

I am advised that :

Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet

- (a) 128 (includes permanent part-time employees).
- (b)
 - (i) 88.
 - (ii) 23.

Treasury

- (a) 11.
- (b)
 - (i) 9.
 - (ii) Nil.

Anti-Corruption Commission

- (a) Nil.
- (b) Not applicable.

Governor's Establishment

- (a) One.
- (b)
 - (i) One.
 - (ii) Nil.

Office of the Public Sector Standards Commissioner

- (a) Two.
- (b) (i)-(ii) Nil.

Gold Corporation

- (a) 3.
- (b)
 - (i) 3.
 - (ii) Nil.

Office of the Auditor General

- (a) 8.
- (b)
 - (i) 7 - (4 on probation).
 - (ii) 1.

COMMITTEES AND BOARDS REGISTER

2338. Mr RIEBELING to the Premier:

In relation to the Government's "Boards and Committees Register" -

- (a) will the Premier table an updated version of this Register;
- (b) if yes to (a) above, will this information also be provided electronically; and
- (c) if no to (a) above, why not?

Mr COURT replied:

- (a) Yes.
- (b)-(c) Any request for an electronic copy of the Register should be directed to the Director General, Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet.

PUBLIC SECTOR MANAGEMENT ACT, AMENDMENTS

2362. Mr RIPPER to the Minister for Public Sector Management:

- (1) Is the Minister proposing to present proposals to Parliament to amend the Public Sector Management Act 1994 following reported claims by the Minister for Primary Industry that there are deficiencies in the legislation?
- (2) If yes, when will the amending legislation be presented to Parliament?

Mr COURT replied:

- (1) The Public Sector Management Act 1994 has been under review for sometime. In view of the experience with its operations since 1994 and having regard to conclusions reached by Commissioner Gavan Fielding and the working party chaired by Dr Des Kelly, Cabinet has agreed to proceed with a number of amendments to the Act.
- (2) It is intended that amending legislation will be presented to Parliament, as soon as the changes have been appropriately incorporated in a draft Bill.

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES, CREDIT CARD USE FOR RESTAURANT ACCOUNTS

2383. Mr CARPENTER to the Premier:

With regard to accounts from restaurants paid by Government credit cards -

- (a) will the Premier confirm that cardholders are required to retain receipts which itemise individual meal and beverage purchases;
- (b) will the Premier also confirm that cardholders are required to record details of all individuals with whom the cardholder dines on official business;
- (c) is the Premier satisfied with current guidelines regarding restaurant receipts for official business dining on corporate credit cards; and
- (d) if not, why not?

Mr COURT replied:

- (a) All government agencies adhere to guidelines for payment vouchers as set out in Treasurer's Instruction 308.
- (b) Guidelines for Expenditure on Official Hospitality have been issued which specify the detail required for persons dining on official business.
- (c)-(d) The current guidelines regarding supporting documentation to a transaction are considered to be appropriate and reflect the requirements outlined in Treasurer's Instruction 308. It is noted that some service providers supply minimal information to support a transaction.

ROYAL LIFE SAVING SOCIETY, FUNDING

2430. Mr RIPPER to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Sport and Recreation:

- (1) (a) Does the Government contribute financially to the Royal Life Saving Society; and
- (b) If yes, how much did it contribute to the society in the following financial years -
 - (i) 1997-98;
 - (ii) 1996-97;
 - (iii) 1995-96;
 - (iv) 1994-95; and
 - (v) 1993-94?

- (2) For what purpose is this funding made available?

Mr MARSHALL replied:

- (1) (a) Yes.

- | | | |
|-----|-------|-----------|
| (b) | (i) | \$157 300 |
| | (ii) | \$ 56 900 |
| | (iii) | \$ 52 000 |
| | (iv) | \$ 52 375 |
| | (v) | \$ 48 260 |

- (2) Financial assistance is provided for the sport component of Royal Life Saving activities. Areas supported include: coach accreditation courses, junior competitions, community education, employment of a development officer and assistance for state team representation. In 1997/98 the State Government also contributed \$100 000 towards the Royal Life Saving Water Safety Strategy. This assistance has enabled the Royal Life Saving Society to develop new initiatives and upgrade existing programs aimed at reducing the incidences of drowning in Western Australia.

PILBARA, ECO-TOURISM FACILITIES

2639. Mr BROWN to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Tourism:

- (1) Is the Minister aware of comments made on Radio 6KP on 31 March 1999 concerning the possible development of eco-tourism facilities in traditional Pilbara camping spots which may no longer be used under the Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Act 1995?
- (2) Is the Government or Western Australian Tourism Commission working with or intending to work with local authorities to develop one or more eco-tourism facilities at those camping spots?
- (3) If so, what is the nature of the work being undertaken?
- (4) If not, does the Government or Western Australian Tourism Commission intend to undertake such an examination?

Mr BRADSHAW replied:

- (1) The Western Australian Tourism Commission (WATC) has liaised with the show's producer and the comments were made on the ABC North West Morning Program. The presenter interviewed three people to provide comment on the passing of local by-laws in regard to free camping at Cleaverville and 40 Mile Beaches. The people were the Shire of Roebourne Chief Executive Officer, a local business person and a camper who had traditionally used the beaches. The camper made the "off the cuff" comments in relation to the development of eco-tourism facilities.
- (2)-(4) The WATC is not currently working on the development of eco-tourism facilities at these two locations. However, the WATC is supportive of the development of eco-tourism facilities and local governments are welcome to request funding for assistance with the development of eco-tourism facilities at these locations under the Tourism Development Fund administered by the WATC. Applications for the current funding round close on 7 May 1999.

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES, LEVEL TWO EMPLOYEES

2774. Mr RIEBELING to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Tourism:

In relation to the employment status of Level Two employees of the agencies falling within the Minister's responsibility -

- (a) what was the total number of Level Two employees at each agency as at 20 April 1999; and
- (b) of these employees, how many were -
 - (i) permanent full time;
 - (ii) permanent part time; and
 - (iii) on short term contract?

Mr BRADSHAW replied:

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN TOURISM COMMISSION

- | | |
|-----|----------|
| (a) | 46 |
| (b) | (i) 31 |
| | (ii) 2 |
| | (iii) 13 |

ROTTNEST ISLAND AUTHORITY

- | | |
|-----|-----------|
| (a) | 8 |
| (b) | (i) 6 |
| | (ii) Nil. |
| | (iii) 2 |

SCHOOL CROSSINGS

2844. Ms MacTIERNAN to the Minister for Police:

- (1) How many new guarded school crossings were provided with funding in 1998?
- (2) What schools were provided with new guarded crossing in 1998?
- (3) How many schools have applications for new crossings currently before the Department?
- (4) Can the Minister provide a list of schools with current applications for new guarded school crossings?

Mr PRINCE replied:

- (1) 18.

- (2) The following schools will utilise the School Crossings placed in 1998:

School	Suburb	School	Suburb
Chisholm Catholic College	Bedford	Star of The Sea	Safety Bay
St Peter's Primary	Bedford	Rockingham Senior High	Safety Bay
Coogie Primary	Munster	Lakeland High	Jandakot
North Woodvale Primary	Woodvale	Atwell Primary	Jandakot
Ballajura Primary	Ballajura	Perth Modern Senior High	Subiaco
Ballajura Community	Ballajura	Intensive Language Centre	Subiaco
Yangebup Primary	Yangebup	John Forrest Senior High	Morley
Hainsworth Primary	Girrawheen	Corpus Christi College	Bateman
Seaforth Primary	Gosnells	Canning Vale Primary	Canning Vale
Beldon Primary	Beldon	Sutherland Primary	Dianella
St Mary's Anglican	Hillarys	Dianella Primary	Dianella
Currambine Primary	Currambine	Leeming Primary	Leeming
Greenmount Primary	Greenmount	Leeming High	Leeming
St Anthony's Primary	Greenmount	Bellridge Senior High	Beldon
Safety Bay Primary	Safety Bay		

It must be noted that the placement of School Crossings is not necessarily specific to particular schools and in fact, School Crossings may be put in place for the following reasons:

- (i) On application from a school or parent body;
- (ii) On application from several schools or parent bodies;
- (iii) The identification of a student pedestrian need on major arterial roads.

- (3) 21.

- (4) Yes. Refer following:

School	Street(s)	Suburb
Forrest Crescent Primary	Redheart & Hickory	Thornlie
St Columba's Primary	Garret & Kitchener	Bayswater
Kinross Primary	Callander & Carrick	Kinross
Manning Primary	Manning & Ley	Manning
Beehive Montessori	Curtain & Marine	Mosman Park
Morley Primary	Vera & Wellington	Morley
Sacred Heart College	Hocking & St Helier	Sorrento
Mindarie Primary	Anchorage & Rothesay	Mindarie
Living Waters Lutheran	Currie & Dodd	Warnbro
Sacred Heart Forrest	Lake & Ovens	Thornlie
Yanchep District High	Lagoon & Ives	Yanchep

Mullaloo Heights Primary	Charonia & Schaphella	Mullaloo
Roleystone Primary	Jarrah & Robin	Roleystone
John Curtin Senior High	East & Ellen	Fremantle
John Calvin School	South Western & Abernathy	Byford
Carine Senior High	Marmion & Almadine	Carine
McKillop Catholic Primary	Yangebup & Osprey	Yangebup
Hollywood Senior High	Aberdare & Hopetoun	Nedlands
Carmel School	Cresswell & Woodrow	Dianella
Hollywood Senior High	Aberdare & Commercial	Nedlands

DISABILITY SERVICES, FUNDING

2850. Mr McGOWAN to the Minister for Disability Services:

In light of the Federal Minister for Disability Services comments regarding her refusal to adequately fund the State and Territory Governments "disability programs" -

- (a) did the Minister have a position on the need for disability services funding;
- (b) if he did what was it;
- (c) was it a fully researched position;
- (d) did the research, if any, consult people with disability, parents of children with disability and/or carers of such people;
- (e) did the research, if any, consult disability community and/or welfare groups/agencies;
- (f) was this position put to and agreed by Cabinet; and
- (g) if the 'position' was not put to Cabinet, why not?

Mr OMODEI replied:

- (a) Yes.
- (b) The Commonwealth should take the major responsibility in contributing towards the \$294 million required to address the long standing backlog of unmet need for accommodation and support services by people with disabilities.
- (c) Yes. The extent of unmet need was identified in a national study undertaken for the Commonwealth and States by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in 1996.
- (d)-(e) Yes.
- (f) No.
- (g) It would be premature to do so in the absence of any Commonwealth funding offer.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, RECORDS MANAGEMENT SERVICES BRANCH

2875. Mr RIPPER to the Minister for Education:

In relation to the proposal to contract out the Records Management Services branch of the Education Department -

- (a) what are the names of the companies which have expressed an interest in this contract;
- (b) when will a decision be made on this contract; and
- (c) apart from confidential personal records, what other type of records are held in this section?

Mr BARNETT replied:

- (a) The names of the companies cannot be released as the Department is in the process of tender evaluation.
- (b) By the end of May a preferred supplier should be nominated. There would be a period of contract negotiation and award of contract.
- (c) Apart from confidential personnel records, the section also manages the Department's general administrative and school related records.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

STATE BUDGET, LEAKING OF INFORMATION

778. Dr GALLOP to the Premier:

What role did the Premier or his staff play in the leaking to journalists of details to be announced in the state budget this afternoon?

Mr COURT replied:

Journalists have been asking me for several weeks what is the main thrust of the budget and I have told them. Our goal on taxes, charges and priority areas in health and education and the like has been published; there is nothing secret about that. The details in the budget on taxes, charges etc have remained confidential.

CARNARVON RESIDENTS, PETITION

779. Mr SWEETMAN to the Minister for Police:

- (1) Is the minister aware of the petition I presented yesterday from residents of the Carnarvon area urging that legislative measures be introduced into law as a matter of urgency to protect communities and families?
- (2) If so, is the minister able to provide a response?

Mr PRINCE replied:

- (1)-(2) I am very well aware of the petition presented by the member for Ningaloo. The petition had more than 1 000 additional signatures attached to it in sheets headed "Save our Town" and for the information of the House I table them.

Members of the House should be aware that Carnarvon, a relatively small place in terms of population, has been so affected by what has been occurring there in recent times that 1 000 residents who live there have seen fit to put their names and addresses on pieces of paper which they knew would be publicly available. That shows the degree of concern in that area about community safety and security. It must be said that in recent times the corner has been turned and things have changed. There is a move for that type of behaviour to be much more controlled. I congratulate the police for having some considerable part in doing that at present.

I assure the member and the people of Carnarvon that the Government takes extremely seriously what has been occurring there. Not only the police but also many other agencies have been trying to get to the causes of the behaviour and the reasons for it happening in that place at this time. In other words, they are doing everything they possibly can, not just to militate the concerns but to actually remove the causes of that behaviour that is so against community safety and security.

[See paper No 934.]

REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT, BUDGET

780. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) What is the total budget for advertising and promoting the Regional Forest Agreement?
- (2) How much of that is state funding and how much is federal funding?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

- (1) Because of the huge interest in the Regional Forest Agreement, it is totally appropriate to widely communicate the results of the process. It was pleasing to note that Professor Peachment, speaking yesterday on the radio, also thought that was the case. The planned expenditure to date is \$310 000.

Dr Gallop: Propaganda!

Mrs EDWARDES: To continue -

- (2) The state funding is estimated at \$50 000 and federal funding at approximately \$260 000.

It is interesting that the Leader of the Opposition has just talked about propaganda. If he casts his mind back to just before the state election in 1989 when the Dowding Labor Party used Andrew MacFarlane from *Patrol Boat* to make three 30-second advertisements in the Shannon, Leeuwin and Lane Pool parks - basically to show how green the Labor Party was - he will recall it spent \$313 000 on air time. Just with media inflation today, that would equate to \$485 000, which does not take into account production costs which would be in the region of \$50 000 to \$75 000.

PRIMARY SCHOOL, FALCON-DAWESVILLE

781. Mr MARSHALL to the Minister for Education:

The growing numbers in the Falcon-Dawesville area last year indicated that there could be a need for a new primary school south of the Dawesville Channel. The 1999 enrolment figures at the Falcon Primary School are such that there is now an

urgent need for a new primary school in the area. Will the minister advise what plans are in progress to see that a new school eventuates?

Mr BARNETT replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

I have visited the schools referred to by the member. It is true that Falcon Primary School is growing and has a significant student enrolment. As at February this year there are 154 preprimary students and 633 primary students. It is anticipated that the school will grow to around 700 students in total by 2000. A local education program is under way in that area. I am conscious that a significant and growing number of students at Falcon school come from south of the Dawesville Channel. Depending on the results of the local area planning process, it is anticipated that a new school will be opened in that area from the beginning of 2002, although that decision has not yet been made and will remain under review as we monitor growth in the area.

REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT, ADVERTISING AUTHORISATION

782. Mr KOBELKE to the Minister for the Environment:

Will the Government's radio and television advertising on its Regional Forest Agreement comply with the requirements of the Broadcasting Services Act which requires all political advertising to carry an authorisation tag?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

That is easy to answer because it is not political advertising. When 30 000 people make submissions to the public consultation paper with the level of interest it has raised, they have absolutely every right to know and understand the outcomes of the process. Even Professor Peachment himself agreed yesterday.

TIMBER MILL, EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

783. Dr CONSTABLE to the Minister for the Environment:

I refer to the minister's comments in *The West Australian* that the Government would call for expressions of interest from the private sector to operate a modernised timber mill currently owned by Bunnings and ask -

- (1) In what capacity is a free enterprise Government calling for expressions of interest for the operation of a mill owned by Bunnings?
- (2) Has this proposal for government involvement in this mill been to Cabinet?
- (3) What is the likely cost of the Government's involvement in the Nannup mill?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

- (1)-(3) I am pleased that the member asked that question because we will be submitting the proposal to the private sector for expressions of interest. Therefore, there will not be any government involvement. Basically, the mill will have a new operator and that is what will be put out for expressions of interest. The Government will attach 20 000 cubic metres of jarrah to the mill itself, which is unusual.

Dr Constable: It is owned by Bunnings.

Mrs EDWARDES: Would the member like to listen to the answer? Then she might have a question. The Bunnings mill operated at Nannup will have a new operator. It is the proposal that a new operator take over the mill and restructure it into a new-age mill for local manufacturing and the like that will go out for expressions of interest. The Government will attach 20 000 cubic metres of jarrah and the private sector will take over that mill, not the government sector. It is the community in the town of Nannup together with Bunnings and the Government that will ensure there will still be a mill operating at Nannup for the people of Nannup.

Mr Carpenter: That is a scandal.

Mrs EDWARDES: Absolutely not. Members opposite should have thought about it themselves.

STATE BUDGET, PROVISION OF INFORMATION COST

784. Mr OSBORNE to the Premier:

How much will the Government spend this year on providing information to the people of Western Australia about the 1999-2000 state budget?

Mr COURT replied:

In addition to the actual cost of the documents, this year the Government will be publishing the *Budget Statements* on the Internet. It will also be available on CD-ROM. Over the past few years the Government has made a leaflet drop to all households providing a summary of the budget and that will be done through the local newspapers this year. The cost has been just under \$200 000 in past years and will be less than that this year. I find it amazing that members opposite have described the advertising on the Regional Forest Agreement as propaganda.

Several members interjected.

Mr COURT: As the Minister for the Environment said, members opposite were members of a Government which paid a star of *Patrol Boat* to make a series of advertisements and spent about \$500 000 promoting not an RFA but -

Mr Omodei: An election.

Mr COURT: No, it was after an election. It was not promoting an RFA but was just for general public relations. That Government also had David Bellamy make a series of television advertisements about the operation of the Department of Conservation and Land Management for which he was paid about \$70 000 plus air fares, accommodation et cetera. Those advertisements were not about an RFA being released either.

Mr Grill: He later wanted them back.

Mr COURT: I think he still wants them back. It is hypocrisy. We are releasing material about a Regional Forest Agreement and that was just feelgood advertising.

GRUBB FINANCE

785. Ms MacTIERNAN to the Minister for Fair Trading:

Some notice of this question has been given.

- (1) Can the minister confirm that the Finance Brokers Supervisory Board has received advice in the past 24 hours that notwithstanding undertakings made to the Australian Securities and Investments Commission not to take on new investments, Mr Bruce Grubb of Grubb Finance has again attempted to induce an investor victim into a new mortgage investment?
- (1) Can the minister advise the House whether in light of this disturbing information, the Finance Brokers Supervisory Board is now prepared to use its powers under section 73 of the Finance Brokers Control Act to make application to have a supervisor appointed by the court to protect the interests of elderly investors at the mercy of this unconscionable finance broker?

Mr SHAVE replied:

- (1) I do not know who in the ministry is giving the member for Armadale this information.

Mr Carpenter: It is not that cricket umpire I hope.

Mr SHAVE: It might have been. I had a couple of people in mind but I could not pinpoint it and the member for Armadale -

Mr Ripper: The real question is what advice are you giving the ministry.

Mr SHAVE: Do not get crabby. The member for Belmont did this yesterday. I am dealing with the member for Armadale and the member for Belmont should give her a fair chance. Do not try to shift her off the frontbench, leave her there - she is a treasure.

Mr Brown: That is not what your colleagues say about you.

Several members interjected.

Mr SHAVE: I have been outside reading reports since the member for Bassendean had his little shot this morning.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the minister to answer the question.

Mr SHAVE: I have checked with the ministry and the Finance Brokers Supervisory Board and they have indicated that no such advice has been received by either body.

Ms MacTiernan: That is absolute rubbish! I have a copy of the letter.

Mr SHAVE: I am sorry. If the member for Armadale has any information about this allegation, details of it should be forwarded to the Australian Securities and Investments Commission and the ministry.

- (2) The Australian Securities and Investments Commission has enforceable undertakings with Grubb Finance which prohibit, among other things, the arranging of new loan investments. In view of this and depending on the nature of any complaints, the issue would be discussed by officers of the board with ASIC.

ESSENTIAL SERVICES, CONTINUATION

786. Mr JOHNSON to the Minister for Resources Development:

Can the minister describe the steps being taken by Western Power and AlintaGas to ensure a continuation of essential services on 1 January 2000?

Mr BARNETT replied:

The potential for the millennium bug to cause problems at Western Power is serious. Any collapse or disruption to power supplies is not only inconvenient to customers but also has the potential to cause enormous damage to power stations. Western Power has had a Year 2000 readiness program under way since 1995. All equipment, systems and services with date-related exposures have been identified and remedial action is being taken where appropriate. Testing of the various systems and services is scheduled for completion by mid-1999. The program has twice been audited by an external firm.

The total budget for the program is \$8m. I am fully confident that Western Power has done all the necessary work. There has been strong liaison between all the electricity utilities around Australia on this issue.

AlintaGas has had a project to address this problem since 1996 although the distribution of natural gas through the distribution system does not have a high dependency on computer controlled devices. In that sense AlintaGas is not as potentially vulnerable to problems as Western Power. Nevertheless, AlintaGas has undertaken what is effectively a due diligence exercise. Its main concerns emanate from exposure to potential external sources of which it has no control. I am satisfied that AlintaGas has done all the work necessary to ensure there are not any problems. I am confident that both Western Power and AlintaGas will not experience any problems with the millennium bug.

ATLAS SECONDARY WASTE TREATMENT PLAN, MIRRABOOKA

787. Mr KOBELKE to the Premier:

- (1) Is the Premier aware that a message faxed by the Mayor of the City of Stirling on Saturday, 17 April indicated that the Premier had been advised of some of the problems surrounding the failure of the Atlas secondary waste treatment plant in Mirrabooka?
- (2) What is the extent of the Premier's involvement in trying to resolve the problems with the Atlas secondary waste treatment plant in Mirrabooka?
- (3) Has the Premier received any representations directly or indirectly from the owners or managers of the Atlas facility?
- (4) If so, what was the nature of those representations?

Mr COURT replied:

- (1)-(4) I received a telephone call from a Mr Panizza and I told him that it was appropriate for him to talk to the Minister for the Environment. I do not know what follow up took place but I said it was the responsibility of the Minister for the Environment to follow it through. I contacted the Minister for the Environment and asked her to do so. She explained to me that the issue with the plant was the disposal of one of its by-products.

Mr KOBELKE: The baled waste.

Mr COURT: Yes and whether it could be disposed of on that site. As I understand it, the issue for the City of Stirling was that the cost of its rubbish collection has risen as a result of previous decisions and if the bale waste needs to be removed, it will make the plant uneconomic and the City of Stirling will have to make other arrangements. Without knowing all the detail, it is important to recognise that someone has made a commitment to try to get some form of recycling processing that will enable us to stop our dependence on the open tips. I cannot provide the member with any more detail. However, I am sure that the Minister for the Environment can bring him up to date on the negotiations that have taken place.

RUGBY UNION TEST, FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

788. Mr BAKER to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Tourism:

I refer to the forthcoming Australia v Ireland rugby union test to be played at Subiaco Oval on Saturday, 19 June this year. Will the parliamentary secretary please advise of any financial assistance provided by EventsCorp for the staging of this important international sporting event, and also the level of any anticipated consequential benefit to the tourism and hospitality industries as a result of this assistance?

Mr BRADSHAW replied:

The information provided to me is that EventsCorp's support for the Australia v Ireland rugby test match involves close liaison with the Australian Rugby Union and its associated travel agencies, promotional campaigns estimated at \$14 500 at this stage, and other facets of the event, including analysing international television coverage.

Although last year's test match between Australia and South Africa attracted \$8.4m in economic impact, EventsCorp does not anticipate as great an economic impact with the Irish match. However, media impact into one of Western Australia's target tourism markets, the United Kingdom, should be considerable, and EventsCorp is focusing its energies on this area this year.

INTERVAL RESORT NETWORKS (AUSTRALASIA) PTY LTD, COMPLAINTS

789. Ms MacTIERNAN to the Minister for Fair Trading:

- (1) Can the minister confirm that the Ministry of Fair Trading has had more than 50 complaints in respect of Interval Resort Networks (Australasia) Pty Ltd?
- (2) When were these complaints first received?
- (3) Can the minister explain why neither he nor the Commissioner for Fair Trading has issued a warning to consumers advising them of the dangers of falling for the high-pressure sales technique and misleading claims of this operator?

Mr SHAVE replied:

The person in the Ministry of Fair Trading who provided these figures to the member for Armadale has been less than fair with her, because if I were having a dorothy dixer prepared, she could not have prepared a better question.

- (1) Yes, I can confirm that the ministry has received 50 complaints.
- (2) The first complaints were received in November-December, 1997.
- (3) The member for Armadale would have us believe that she is a regular visitor to the ministry's web site. As such, she should be aware of a public warning to consumers of possible risks of purchasing club entitlements to discount travel and accommodation, actually naming Interval Resort Networks. This warning was also contained in a media statement distributed widely throughout Western Australia, and was issued in January 1999, almost four months ago. The text of that media release is as follows -

The Ministry of Fair Trading today alerted consumers to the possible risks of purchasing club entitlements to discount travel and accommodation.

Commissioner for Fair Trading Patrick Walker -

of whom my good friend has sometimes been less than complimentary -

- said the Ministry had received more than 30 complaints in the last month about Interval Resort Networks (Australasia) Pty Ltd.

Interval Resort Networks employs telemarketers who ask people to attend a 90 minute presentation in Northbridge at which consumers are offered free resort accommodation subject to payment of a booking fee, if they sit through the presentation.

Mr Walker said club membership offered purchasers the prospect of significant discounts on air travel and accommodation which were greatly appealing to people who enjoyed travelling.

"Some consumers have complained that they have been unable to secure discounts that are being promoted, or have had problems booking accommodation on the dates that suit them" Mr Walker said.

"I believe that there are enough complaints about this firm to warrant alerting the public to a potential problem.

"Fair Trading is investigating allegations that are made by WA consumers and we will take whatever action is necessary to protect consumers' rights and interests," Mr Walker said.

After hearing the member for Armadale's comments, I hope that following question time she will ring Mr Walker and compliment him on the fine job that he does. I am more than happy to table that press release.

[See paper No 935.]

INTERVAL RESORT NETWORKS (AUSTRALASIA) PTY LTD, PROSECUTION

790. Ms MacTIERNAN to the Minister for Fair Trading:

I have a supplementary question. As the problem is so grave, with over 50 complaints having been received, why has the minister not commenced prosecution for breach of the fair trading legislation?

Mr SHAVE replied:

As I said when reading that press release, some 30 complaints were received.

Ms MacTiernan: You said 50 in answer to the first question.

Mr SHAVE: Yes, I did. I think I also said there were 30 complaints. The attendant has taken my press release.

Several members interjected.

Mr SHAVE: I did not issue the press release; Mr Walker did.

Mr Carpenter: You read it out.

Mr SHAVE: Yes. Mr Walker said there had been 30 complaints in the last month. I am advised that the ministry is examining the issue that has just been raised by the member for Armadale, and I can assure her that the comments that the Commissioner for Fair Trading made in the last paragraph of that press release, in which he said that he would take whatever action was necessary to protect consumers' rights and interests, will be attended to.

SCHOOL BUS SYSTEM, EATON AREA

791. Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN to the minister representing the Minister for Transport:

Will the minister please explain what improvements are being made to the school bus system in the Eaton area, particularly in relation to the Parkridge estate?

Mr OMODEI replied:

The Minister for Transport has provided the following response: In 1998, an additional bus was operated to cater for student numbers in Eaton. The servicing of Parkridge has been dependent upon the development of arterial roads. Although these are not yet available, arrangements have been made for Bunbury City Transit to extend a service into Parkridge for students.

I understand that was due to commence on 12 April. I am sure that part of the reason for that is because of the representations made by the member for Mitchell. The service will be a valuable asset for the Parkridge community, and the member is to be commended for pursuing that issue.

SEWERAGE, PARKERVILLE

792. Mrs van de KLASHORST to the Minister for Water Resources:

Will the minister please consider connecting the proposed Parkerville Anglican subdivision to the sewerage main rather than providing a separate sewerage plant specific to that development?

Dr HAMES replied:

As members will know, the Government, through the Water Corporation, is doing its best to get as much infill sewerage as possible into this region. However, this is a difficult task because of the height and the hilly and rocky terrain. In areas in which it is possible to put in infill sewerage, we are doing so. However, it is not always easy to connect the infill sewerage system to the main sewerage system. Members will know that in Mundaring we have created an artificial wetland for the disposal of the sewage. That has received a mixed reaction from the local community: Some support it and some oppose it. The difficulty with this area is the difference in cost between the two options. The cost to the Water Corporation of locally managed treatment with something like a wetland for disposal would be in the order of \$2m to \$3m, whereas connection with the main infill sewerage would be \$10m to \$11m. That is a large difference. However, we will ensure that whatever system is put in place - that has not been decided - will have proper Environmental Protection Authority assessment and will comply with all the requirements.

HOMESWEST, WAITING LIST

793. Mr MARLBOROUGH to the Minister for Housing:

- (1) Can the minister confirm that the Government's housing policy at the last state election included a promise to reduce the Homeswest waiting list by 25 per cent?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that mobile phones are not allowed in the Chamber.

Mr MARLBOROUGH: To continue -

- (2) Can the minister also confirm that since making that promise the Homeswest waiting list has actually increased by 12 per cent?
- (3) When does the minister expect to honour his promise?

Dr HAMES replied:

- (1)-(3) As the shadow Minister for Housing said, it is true that that was the policy when we went into Government. However, as to the programs that have been initiated by Homeswest, particularly its New Living programs, of which the member is well aware because these are active in his area along with other areas, there is a side to that issue that we have not been able to resolve. We have been spending a lot of our money, time and effort improving the standard of Homeswest housing across Western Australia. That has resulted in a lack of availability of some houses into which new applicants can move. Many people from the member's area, where there was something like a 30 per cent to 40 per cent Homeswest presence, have been moved into existing homes in surrounding areas that might otherwise have gone to new applicants.

Our home loan programs, particularly the Good Start and the Right to Buy programs, together with the safety nets we have introduced, have meant that a lot of people who want to get into home ownership have been able to get onto the Homeswest waiting list in order to do that. As a result, we have had another influx of people who want to get into the home loan programs and who want to get onto the waiting list. Late last year or early this year I had to change the policy from one of numbers on the waiting list to one of time spent on the waiting list. The members for Perth and Fremantle will be aware that not just recently but for a long time people have been waiting for up to eight or nine years to get into an area where they want to be on the waiting list. The time period has been very long. I have got Homeswest to change to a time-period policy so that no-one will be on the waiting list for longer than three years before getting a home. We have not arrived at that period yet, but we have it down to between four and five years. I hope that at the end of next year it will be three years. In doing that we are putting money into the seats of the members for Fremantle and Perth and into Joondalup region to make a lot of spot purchases to ensure that the Homeswest waiting list time is reduced. That is very important. People should not have to wait for longer than three years to find accommodation. In that sense the priority is different and we are working very hard on the priority list. The numbers on the waiting list have gone up slightly from 12 000 to 13 000 and those figures are correct.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: That completes question time. We had 15 questions.