

Legislative Council

Wednesday, the 11th September, 1974

The PRESIDENT (the Hon. A. F. Griffith) took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE

FUEL, ENERGY AND POWER RESOURCES LEGISLATION

Deferment: Request by TLC

The Hon. D. W. COOLEY, to the Minister for Justice:

- (1) Has the Premier received a letter from the Trades and Labor Council of Western Australia in which the council has—
 - (a) drawn the Premier's attention to the fact that the Fuel, Energy and Power Resources Act Amendment Bill has inflamed and divided influential and representative sections of the community in Western Australia;
 - (b) indicated that it is prepared and willing to join in conferences with the Government and other parties to provide for the development of procedures in civil emergency situations;
 - (c) requested a deferment of the Bill until such time as the abovenamed conference has been held and the criteria to cater for emergency situations have been fully explored?
- (2) Is it the intention of the Government to give consideration to the Trades and Labor Council's proposals?

The Hon. N. McNEILL replied:

I am grateful to the Hon. D. W. Cooley for notice of his intention to ask the question, and I advise as follows—

- (1) and (2) The Premier has received a letter from the Trades and Labor Council under date the 7th September. He has replied and I request permission to table a copy of the reply.

The copy of letter was tabled (see paper No. 202).

QUESTIONS (4): ON NOTICE

1. LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Traffic Control in Country Areas

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON, to the Minister for Health:

Further to my question regarding traffic control in country areas on

the 14th August, 1974, will the Minister advise—

- (a) the names of local authorities from whom the information has to be obtained;
- (b) the date on which each local authority was requested to supply the information;
- (c) which local authorities have replied; and
- (d) the date on which each reply was received?

The Hon. N. E. BAXTER replied:

- (a) Augusta-Margaret River
Beverley
Boulder
Broomehill
Brookton
Bridgetown-Greenbushes
Bruce Rock
Boyup Brook
Capel
Carnamah
Carnarvon
Chapman Valley
Chitterling
Coorow
Corrigin
Cranbrook
Cunderdin
Dalwallinu
Dandaragan
Dardanup
Denmark
Donnybrook-Balingup
Dowerin
Dumbleyung
Dundas
Exmouth
Gingin
Gnowangerup
Goomalling
Greenough
Harvey
Irwin
Kalamunda
Katanning
Kellerberrin
Kent
Kojonup
Koorda
Kulin
Mount Marshall
Mount Magnet
Meekatharra
Mingenew
Moora
Morawa
Mukinbudin
Mullewa
Mundaring
Murchison
Nannup
Narrogin
Northampton
Nungarin
Perenjori
Pingelly
Plantagenet
Qualradling

Sandstone
Shark Bay
Swan
Tammin
Three Springs
Toodyay
Trayning
Upper Gascoyne
Victoria Plains
Wagin
Wandering
Wanneroo
West Arthur
Westonia
West Pilbara
Williams
Woodanilling
Wickepin
Wongan-Ballidu
Wyalkatchem
Yalgoo
Yilgarn
York

Towns—
Bunbury
Narrogin
Kalgoorlie

(b) 26th August, 1974.

(c) and (d)—

Municipality	Date
Beverley	5/9/74
Boulder	2/9/74
Broomehill	5/9/74
Brookton	2/9/74
Bruce Rock	4/9/74
Bridgetown-Green-	
bushes	4/9/74
Boyup Brook	3/9/74
Capel	4/9/74
Chapman Valley	6/9/74
Corrigin	11/9/74
Cunderdin	4/9/74
Dalwallinu	5/9/74
Dardanup	4/9/74
Donnybrook-Balingup	4/9/74
Dowerin	4/9/74
Dundas	6/9/74
Gingin	5/9/74
Greenough	9/9/74
Kellerberrin	3/9/74
Kojonup	9/9/74
Koorda	9/9/74
Kulin	2/9/74
Mount Marshall	5/9/74
Mount Magnet	2/9/74
Meekatharra	11/9/74
Mingenew	2/9/74
Moora	5/9/74
Morawa	3/9/74
Mukinbudin	3/9/74
Mundaring	5/9/74
Murchison	10/9/74
Nannup	6/9/74
Narrogin	9/9/74
Northampton	6/9/74
Nungarin	9/9/74
Pingelly	5/9/74
Plantagenet	9/9/74
Qualtrading	6/9/74
Swan	9/9/74

Tammin	3/9/74
Three Springs	2/9/74
Trayning	3/9/74
Victoria Plains	4/9/74
Wagin	5/9/74
Wandering	4/9/74
Williams	4/9/74
Woodanilling	6/9/74
Wickepin	6/9/74
Wongan-Ballidu	6/9/74
Wyalkatchem	2/9/74
Yalgoo	2/9/74
Yilgarn	9/9/74
York	4/9/74
Towns—	
Bunbury	6/9/74
Kalgoorlie	3/9/74

2. SCHOOL OF THE AIR

Meekatharra

The Hon. S. J. DELLAR, to the Minister for Justice:

In view of the advice forwarded to me on the 4th September, 1974, by the Minister for Works that tenders for the construction of a new School of the Air at Meekatharra had been recalled, will he advise—

(a) the reason or reasons why tenders have been recalled;

(b) in view of this delay, will the new building be ready for occupation at the start of the 1975 school year?

The Hon. N. McNEILL replied:

(a) No tenders were received.

(b) Yes, subject to receipt of satisfactory tenders.

3.

POLICE

Officers-Population Ratio

The Hon. S. J. DELLAR, to the Minister for Health:

(1) What is the ratio of policemen per head of population in Western Australia?

(2) What is the ratio in the other States of Australia?

The Hon. N. E. BAXTER replied:

(1) 554 persons to each police officer.

(2) In October, 1970, the ratios applying to other States were—

Victoria	1 : 732
New South Wales	1 : 623
South Australia	1 : 620
Queensland	1 : 585
Tasmania	1 : 525

(Updated advice of this date from New South Wales is a current ratio of 1 : 600 and from South Australia 1 : 551).

4. This question was postponed.

BILLS (2): THIRD READING

1. Teacher Education Act Amendment Bill.
2. Art Gallery Act Amendment Bill.

Bills read a third time, on motions by the Hon. N. E. Baxter (Minister for Health), and transmitted to the Assembly.

STAMP ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

THE HON. N. McNEILL (Lower West—Minister for Justice) [4.40 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this legislation is—

to give effect to uniform changes to the stamp duty imposed on credit and rental transactions;

to vary the rates of duty imposed on bills of exchange and promissory notes; and

to make a number of desirable administrative changes.

I shall explain each of these proposals.

Interest rates commenced to rise in the last financial year and by the end of that year they had risen to unprecedented levels, particularly in the short-term money market.

Duty is imposed under the credit and rental business part of our Stamp Act on the principal of a loan or discounting transaction, where the interest charged on that loan or transaction exceeds a specified rate per annum.

This rate may be varied by a declaration in the *Government Gazette* and it recently has been raised to 14 per cent in this State and similarly throughout Australia.

Representations were received prior to the end of the last financial year, both in this and other States, for relief from the imposition of stamp duty, particularly on short-term transactions which were not previously subject to this tax. New South Wales and Victoria both undertook to provide exemption for short-term money market transactions as a result of conferences held between representatives of those States and major financial organisations. This has been put into effect by administrative action not only in those two States but in other States which have similar legislation.

The reason for granting exemption rather than endeavouring continuously to vary the interest rate is that a change in the overall interest rate structure renders the use of a declared rate variation inappropriate to resolve the problem. As members will have noted from the Press, this State has granted exemption administratively from the 1st June, 1974. This action is in line with that taken in other

States and was done in this way because the rapid upward movement in interest rates required immediate action.

The granting of these exemptions will not affect the budgeted stamp duty collections in 1974-75, as these transactions did not previously attract duty. Clearly if no exemption had been granted in this State, the dealings would not have taken place here but would have been transacted in other States where exemption is available with a serious inhibiting effect on the development of the local short-term money market.

Provision is made in this Bill to confirm the exemption which is now operating on an administrative basis. Because short-term transactions were not intended to be subject to duty, because interest rates on these transactions have reached record levels, and because their nation-wide nature require a uniform State approach, failure to grant the exemption would prejudice the Western Australian market.

The proposed amendment will exempt all loan and discount transactions provided the terms of the transactions do not exceed 180 days and in each case the amount involved is not less than \$50 000.

Those which will qualify for exemption in the case of discount transactions, are only bills or notes of the specified term and amounts, negotiated by banks or official or unofficial dealers.

Loans will qualify, subject to the transactions being within the specified limits of terms and amounts, if made to banks, to or by official or unofficial short-term market dealers, or by one corporation to another by way of temporary investment.

Provision is made for the Treasurer to declare and publish in the *Government Gazette* the names of the official and unofficial dealers who qualify for the exemption.

The Bill contains provisions to permit the Treasurer of the State by instrument in writing published in the *Government Gazette*, to declare that the exemption applies in relation to the transactions I have detailed with power to make the declaration from a specified date.

This date may be a date earlier than the date on which the instrument is made.

It is proposed, subject to this Bill being passed, that a declaration as from the 1st June, 1974, be made to confirm the action already taken administratively to exempt these transactions.

The law also contains a provision which permits the Treasurer to revoke the exemption in justifiable circumstances.

I now turn to the variations in the rates of stamp duty imposed on term bills of exchange and promissory notes.

A rate of 10c per \$100 of the face value of a bill or note is imposed under the current law. The rate is charged irrespective of the length of the term of the bill.

This system of duty markedly disadvantages short-term bills and notes because a short-term bill of one month is subject to the same duty as is a bill for the same amount for a three-year term.

Another inhibiting factor in the growth of the relatively recently established commercial bill market, is the fact that where duty is paid in one State on the issue of a bill, additional stamp duty of the same amount is also payable to another State should that bill subsequently be negotiated in that State.

Thus in its short life, if a bill is negotiated in three States, three times the duty is paid as opposed to once if the bill is negotiated on the same number of occasions in the State of origin.

Both of these factors are seriously impeding the development of the market, particularly in this State; and during recent times financial houses throughout Australia have been making representations for a change in the system.

This problem was examined by all State taxation authorities and uniform changes have been or are being made by all State Governments.

In both New South Wales and Victoria legislation to effect these changes has been introduced. While the legislation has been passed in Victoria it has not yet been proclaimed to come into operation as it is desired to introduce the change on the same date throughout Australia.

The proposal is to change the rates imposed on term bills and notes to a duty of 1c per \$100 of the face value for each 10 days or part thereof of the term of the bill or note until the stamp duty rate reaches 12c per \$100.

Where a bill or note has been duly stamped in a State in Australia and is subsequently negotiated in another State, the duty applying to a cheque drawn in one State and negotiated in another will apply. Currently in Western Australia a flat rate of 6c per cheque is imposed.

Therefore, the additional duty on a term bill or promissory note will be 6c only in cases where it has been drawn in another State and subsequently negotiated in Western Australia.

In addition, where an overseas bill or note enters Australia, the State of entry will collect the *ad valorem* duty imposed.

Should the bill or note subsequently be negotiated in another State or States, then only the flat rate applying to cheques will be imposed.

The effect of the proposed amendment is illustrated by the following example: A bill drawn for \$10 000 for 30 days now

attracts \$10 stamp duty. Under the proposal it will attract \$3. If the duty is expressed as an interest percentage on the Bill, the effective rate will fall from 1.2 per cent to 0.37 per cent.

Where a bill is for a term of more than 110 days, the current rate now imposed of 10c per \$100 will rise to 12c per \$100.

Because the duty on bills and notes is mainly paid by the use of adhesive stamps, it is difficult to make precise estimates of any possible effect on revenue. However, after a study of the limited data available, all States have concluded there will be no marked change in current yield.

The encouragement to the market leading to the use of more commercial bills, together with the rate increase on the longer-term bills, are expected to offset fully the lower yields to be obtained from short-term bills.

The Bill now before members contains provisions to give effect to the new rates and in addition contains provisions to ensure that the correct duty is paid on Bills which appear on the face to be short term but are endorsed or subject to agreements in such a way as to turn them effectively into long-term bills.

The target date for the introduction of this uniform change in rates is the 1st January, 1975, and for that purpose this section of the proposed law is to be brought into operation on a day to be proclaimed.

The achievement of the target date will depend upon the legislative programmes and progress of the necessary legislation through State Parliaments.

I shall now detail the proposed changes in administrative procedures which are all aimed at improving the service provided to taxpayers. There are three of these.

Provision is made to permit the continued use of a uniform stamp duty emblem on cheques, but without requiring the amount of duty paid on each cheque to be shown in the emblem.

If members will consult their cheque books, they will find that there is a small square which currently contains the words, "Stamp duty 6 cents paid". This emblem has been used on a uniform basis throughout Australia from the 1st July, 1973. It came into use because the banks approached each State with a request for a uniform emblem to facilitate the introduction of personalised encoded cheques which involve the use of a computer process.

However, shortly after the uniform emblem was introduced, Victoria raised its rate of duty to 7c per cheque. This destroyed the uniformity and presented the banks with a printing problem. The banks as a result requested that the amount be dropped from the uniform emblem.

The matter was examined at the most recent conference of State taxation authorities and all State representatives agreed to recommend to their respective Governments the change which had been requested.

All States, except Western Australia, are able to achieve the change by amendments to regulations. In our case the Act needs to be changed because of a statutory requirement that the amount of duty payable be printed on the cheque.

I understand that to date all States have effected the necessary changes to their regulations.

In view of the fact that from time to time the rate of stamp duty may be changed and all States have agreed to the uniform print, this Bill contains a provision to remove the words requiring the duty payable to be printed on each cheque, and to substitute in lieu the requirement that the words "Stamp duty paid", be printed on the cheque.

As it is desired to bring the use of the standard emblem in on a uniform date, provision is made to bring this proposal into operation also on a day to be proclaimed.

Another administrative change contained in the legislation is to remove the 10c charge for what is described as an adjudication.

Under the existing law, wherever there is a doubt about the correct stamp duty to be levied on a document, the Commissioner of State Taxation is required to express his opinion and the document must then be stamped in accordance with that opinion.

For example, a transfer of land being made by way of gift between related parties requires the Commissioner to express his opinion on the amount of duty payable on the document.

These Commissioner's opinions are described as adjudications, for which the current provisions in the Act prescribe that a fee of 10c is to be paid for each one. That fee has not been changed since 1921. This fee is shown on the document by a special machine imprint.

Quite a number of adjudications are carried out and in some cases the fee is not forwarded with the duty. This applies particularly to documents sent in from the country.

The cost of collection of these small outstanding sums is far in excess of the yield, quite apart from which it is, understandably, a source of annoyance to both taxpayer and the administration.

The annual yield from adjudications over the past four years has produced, on average, a little over \$1 200 and this year it is estimated that a little less than \$1 300 will be received.

Quite clearly the time used in attempting to recover outstanding adjudication fees can be put to far better productive use and on the score of public relations with the taxpayers alone, this petty impost should be removed.

The Bill accordingly contains a provision to delete the requirement to pay the 10c adjudication fee wherever this appears in the Act.

The final administrative proposal is to permit the use of an alternative method of stamping documents and this is an important improvement for country centres.

Local clerks of courts and mining registrars are persons administratively authorised to cancel adhesive stamps. This permits the assessment and stamping of simple documents in country areas and is an important service to country taxpayers and agents.

During the past decade the volume of country transactions has risen considerably. However, none has reached the level where the opening and staffing of a branch office of the State Taxation Department could be economically justified.

However the Commissioner maintains a continuous check on the level of documents processed in various country centres so that when the stage is reached that it is an economic proposition to open a branch office, action to this end will be recommended.

Nevertheless, the current volume has given rise to a number of complaints that from time to time the country out-stations run out of supply of certain denominations of stamps. This is frustrating to both taxpayers or their agents and the officials assessing the duty.

Although steps have been taken readily to increase stamp advances and encourage frequent recoups, the problem recurs because of the variable nature of the operations.

The difficulties of country stamping have been raised with the Commissioner when he has been addressing groups of legal and accounting practitioners in some of the major country centres.

A system involving the use of adhesive coupons and cash register machines has been designed by the State Taxation Department in co-operation with the Crown Law and Audit Departments to overcome the problem.

The system involves the use of assessment forms and a specially-designed coupon which may be put through a cash register and then affixed to the document.

In order to provide an improved service to country taxpayers, provision has been made in the Bill to authorise the use of adhesive coupons to denote the payment of stamp duty.

These are fairly extensive because quite a number of changes have to be made to a large number of sections in the current

law. Thus it will take a little time to obtain the necessary stationery and instruct the various officers in the out-stations in the new procedure.

It will not be possible to bring the scheme into operation before the 1st January, 1975, and for this reason the Bill contains a provision to bring the amendments into operation on a day to be proclaimed.

Briefly summarised, the legislation will provide confirmation of the exemption which has been granted to short-term transactions on an Australia-wide basis, it will introduce new, equitable, and uniform rates of duty for term bills of exchange and promissory notes, and will provide an improved service to taxpayers at very little expense to the revenue.

Debate adjourned, on motion by the Hon. R. Thompson (Leader of the Opposition).

EXPLOSIVES AND DANGEROUS GOODS ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

THE HON. N. E. BAXTER (Central—Minister for Health) [4.55 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

When the Explosives and Dangerous Goods Act was passed in 1961 it was intended that it should be the main instrument to exercise control over such substances.

However, there are references to explosives and flammable liquids in certain other Acts of the State and it is conceivable that regulations and by-laws under those Acts may conflict with those under the principal Act now proposed to be amended.

The Bill now before members has been framed to remove certain anomalies from the principal Act and to add provisions which will ensure that its overall objectives are maintained.

Section 6 is to be amended, for instance, to ensure that where there is any inconsistency between the Explosives and Dangerous Goods Act and any other Act the provisions of the former Act will prevail.

Furthermore, the amending Bill is specific in requiring that where, by or under any other Act any provision is made relating to explosives and dangerous goods the provisions so made shall, unless otherwise expressly provided, be observed in addition to, and not in substitution for, or diminution of, the provisions of the Explosives and Dangerous Goods Act.

Explosives may be sold under the provisions of section 30 to the holder of any mining tenement. This provision is considered inconsistent with the overall intent of the Act because it may be applied through the owner to many tenements which are not mines, such as garden areas, homestead leases, and the like.

The Bill proposes to remove this inconsistency by restricting generally the sale of explosives to the owner or manager of a registered mine, or his authorised agent; to a person who holds a license for an explosives magazine in which he stores explosives and to the holder of a permit to purchase explosives, or the holder of a shotfirer's permit.

Section 34 of the Act deals generally with the use of explosives other than for mining, such as blasting to lay underground pipes, tunnel excavation, road works, and land clearing and building.

The Department of Labour—which also has control of blasting on construction sites under the construction safety regulations—and the Mines Department have co-operated to control the use of explosives in town areas.

Proposed amendments to section 34 are directed at achieving uniform control of blasting at all places other than mines, and to remove any inconsistency between the explosives regulations and the construction safety regulations.

I would mention at this point that it is not proposed to discontinue the issue of permits by the police to approved persons who are known to be of good repute. The permits will be issued to small users, such as farmers and prospectors, but with a restriction that the explosives are to be used only in prescribed areas outside towns, and that the blasting sites be a safe distance from public roads and dwellings. These provisions will allow farmers to continue to use explosives for normal development work as they do at present.

The Bill defines in more exact terms the permit to purchase explosives and requires the quantity purchased to be marked on the permit. These permits are normally issued by the police in country towns, at no cost, to reliable people who are known to have a lawful need to use explosives.

The shotfirer's permit, which is required under the construction safety regulations for all blasting operations at construction sites, is defined. Applicants for these permits must pass a test to prove that they know how to use explosives, and have a proper knowledge of regulations covering storage and conveyance of explosives. Suspension and cancellation of the permit occurs should the holder work carelessly.

It is considered that the amendments to section 34 will enable the Mines Department to control blasting operations in residential and town areas in close co-operation with the Department of Labour which deals with blasting only at defined construction sites.

The amendment to section 36 will require that employees of State Government departments possess a shotfirer's permit

for any blasting, and that they comply with the regulations in the same way as private blasting contractors.

State departments are exempted in the principal Act, but have now indicated that they prefer to be subject to its provisions. An exemption remains for Commonwealth departments which may use explosives in accordance with Commonwealth rules.

The purpose of the amendment proposed to section 38 is to clarify the present practice of the Mines Department issuing special licenses for all vehicles which are used to convey explosives in quantities exceeding 500 pounds. I think a mistake has been made with that figure, because it should have been converted to kilograms. By licensing we will ensure that the vehicles are properly equipped and fitted for the purpose of carrying explosives with safety.

The existing subsection (1) of section 38 is to be substituted to enable the department rather than the Minister to control conveyance on vehicles and this for the reason that no Minister has yet exercised the power conferred in the subsection.

The amendment to section 47 extends the power of subinspectors to allow them to inspect explosives as well as dangerous goods.

The nonobservance by any permit or license holder of the terms and conditions of the permit or license is an offence under section 56. Conditions which are set govern the quantity of explosives in a magazine, the quantity to be conveyed in a vehicle, or special conditions applied for flammable liquids as well as explosives. The amendment to this section has been drafted with a view to enabling the department to exercise control over any irregular practices that may arise.

The regulation-making section 62 is to be amended by the insertion of a new subsection relating to standard codes or practices.

The new subsection will provide that the regulations may prescribe that any Act or thing shall be done in a manner specified by reference to a code or practice or a standard which has been printed and published and which has been approved by the Minister for the purpose. This provision has the merit of allowing standard practices to be established in writing so that they may be observed by persons handling dangerous goods and explosives.

As I earlier indicated, the amendments proposed in the Bill seek a standardisation in control of explosives and dangerous goods in this State, so that they may continue more readily to be used in a safe and adequately-controlled manner.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by the Hon. R. T. Leeson.

TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT BILL

In Committee

The Deputy Chairman of Committees (the Hon. R. J. L. Williams) in the Chair; the Hon. N. McNeill (Minister for Justice) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 5 put and passed.

Clause 6: Section 11 amended—

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I move an amendment—

Page 4, after line 6—Insert the following new paragraph to stand as paragraph (c)—

(c) by adding a new subsection after subsection (5b) to stand as subsection (5c) as follows—

(5c) Any person who proves to the satisfaction of the local authority that he is in receipt of a pension under the provisions of "Social Services Act 1947-1972" (Commonwealth Statute) or of a service pension under the provisions of "Repatriation Act 1920-1972" (Commonwealth Statute) and that he is for the time being eligible to participate in those concessions generally referred to as pensioner fringe benefits shall not in respect of one vehicle owned by him be liable to pay the recording fee specified in Part I of the Third Schedule to this Act and the local authority shall in respect of one vehicle owned by any such person charge only one half of the licence fee payable according to the scale in Part III of the Third Schedule to this Act.

When the Bill was being discussed at the second reading stage I took an adjournment of approximately a week so I could have an amendment drafted. However, it was drafted the very next day and placed on the notice paper on the 30th August. I had it drafted for a specific reason; because of the large imposts which would be placed on pensioners who owned vehicles in Western Australia. I pointed out that they were on fixed incomes and the legislation would seriously disadvantage them because in many country towns in Western Australia no public transport is available. I also stated that last year Mr Withers had asked a question concerning the availability of public transport in the Karratha-Dampier-Roebourne area. I do not know whether he included Paraburdoo, but he certainly requested that public transport be extended to that area.

During the debate I pointed out that outside the metropolitan area very few towns in Western Australia have public transport available. I also quoted a cutting dated the 31st July of this year, in which it was stated that Mr Kannis, the public relations officer of the Australian Pensioners' League, had said that some 10 000 pensioners in Western Australia could be seriously affected by the increased license fee because, to a great extent, they had to rely on vehicles. I interpolate here to say that particularly do they rely on them when they live on the outer perimeters of country areas such as Kalgoorlie, Geraldton, and so forth. In those areas it is most essential for pensioners to own a vehicle.

As Mr Kannis said, those vehicles are not used in the same manner as they would be by a city dweller because in most instances the country pensioners utilise the vehicles only to go to town to collect their pensions and household requirements, and to pay a visit to their club or sporting organisations. Many of them travel only a few miles a week and, as Mr Kannis rightly pointed out, many of these pensioners will have to dispose of their vehicles if they are called upon to pay the increase in fees.

Mr Kannis said he was going to visit other States to try to arrange for a rebate or an exemption for pensioners.

I take strong exception to the way in which the Minister replied to the second reading debate. I do not know whether this was because of his ineptitude, but he completely twisted and slanted everything I said. He took my remarks out of context, which I will prove in a moment, and this did him no credit.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: Are you referring to any specific point?

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I will refer to them all in a moment.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: Good.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: If the Minister wants to make his own rules and play the game rough, I will also play it rough. He should take time out to study the Bill and, more importantly, to study what members say on it.

Let us study a few of the comments he made. I first raised the point concerning the license fee for commercial vehicles. The Minister replied—

I understand that Victoria has two separate fees for utilities and motorcars, and that a statutory declaration is required to obtain the lower fee for the light commercial vehicles being used exclusively for private purposes. This system has not operated in Western Australia to date, and the Bill contains no similar provision.

I am not arguing about that. However, in view of the large number of commercial vehicles in Western Australia, not of the

small number, will an examination be made of the Victorian legislation with a view to introducing similar provisions into the Western Australian legislation? Many of these utilities are used merely to tow caravans or other shelter from place to place. This is particularly so in regard to Main Roads Department employees.

The Minister does not consider that the impost for these vehicles is very great, but, for a start, there is a 65 per cent increase and, in addition, when the power weight is taken into consideration a very serious increase will be involved. I will not go into any more details or give any examples, although I could do so.

The Minister also took out of context several other portions of my speech. As I said, I quoted a newspaper cutting concerning Mr Kannis. I also quoted a question asked of the Minister in another place on the 30th July, together with his reply.

When speaking, I accused the Minister of twisting words. I still do because it is a fact of life. However, the Minister has accused me of doing this, which absolutely amazes me. If the Minister has his notes he will find that on page E5 of his type-written speech, which is the third page, is the following—

Generally speaking, the concessions given at present to pensioners in Western Australia are more generous than those in most other States. As stated in the Legislative Assembly by the Minister for Transport, the Government has appointed a committee to investigate the whole question of concessions to pensioners.

Those are his own words.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: That is right I do not deny that.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: When we turn to page F2 of the Minister's type-written speech we find he said—

At the moment the Government is in the process of setting up a committee to consider the granting of concessions to pensioners.

Later he said—

We grant them concessions on drivers' licenses now. This applies to all pensioners.

One moment we find the committee has not been set up, yet later in his speech the Minister said the Government is in the process of setting up a committee to consider the granting of concessions to pensioners, and added that the Government grants them concessions on drivers' licenses now and that this applies to all pensioners. The Minister further said—

Many pensioners, of course, do not own a motorcar, but they do drive a vehicle that is owned by, say, their sons or their daughters.

At this point I interjected and said—

That concession does not apply to all pensioners, either.

The Minister replied, "All aged pensioners." I then said, "No, it does not", and the Minister then replied, "I did not say it applies to all pensioners."

So in the second paragraph on page F2 of the Minister's typewritten notes we find him saying that the granting of concessions on drivers' licenses applies to all pensioners. Later he said, "I did not say it applies to all pensioners"; and when I said "You did", the Minister replied—

I will not argue with the Leader of the Opposition. I know what I said, and I know what I did not say. I cannot agree with the broad statement that pensioners should get the concessions they so rightly deserve.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: He probably wanted to get on with the matter.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: So here we have a responsible Minister contradicting himself.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: The Leader of the Opposition is expected to be responsible.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: If the honourable member keeps quiet he will learn something, because up to date he seems to need a lot of teaching.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: I thought the boot was on the other foot.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: The honourable member makes all his speeches sitting down.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: It is far more comfortable to do so.

The Hon. S. J. Dellar: They do not sound any better, either.

The Hon. N. McNeill: Did the Minister say the pensioners qualified?

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: No. I have read verbatim what the Minister did say. He said he could not agree with the broad statement that pensioners should get the concessions they so rightly deserve.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: That is right.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: During the second reading debate I said—

The question I would like the Minister to answer when he replies to the debate is: What are the findings of that Cabinet subcommittee? It has had the whole of the month of August and part of the month of September to investigate the matter; and probably it was appointed before the end of July. So it is reasonable now to ask for its findings. There is no indication in the Minister's second reading speech of anything concerning this matter, apart from the passage I quoted previously which is to the

effect that the concession fee for pensioners' drivers' licenses shall remain at \$2. That is not a concession at all; it is an increase of some 200 per cent.

I hope that, when I receive a reply, a concession will be granted to pensioners. When we reach the Committee stage of the Bill I will spend some time discussing the eligibility of people in obtaining fringe benefits under both the Commonwealth Repatriation Act and the Social Services Act.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: What do you mean by "apply to pensioners"?

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I would ask the Minister to let me complete my quote.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: Very well.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I continued and said—

Strangely enough, in the State sphere, such matters come under the jurisdiction of the Minister for Community Welfare who happens to be the Minister in charge of the Bill in this House. I know that the introduction of free pensioner travel, and the granting to pensioners of one free trip a year to country centres, was greeted with great acclaim by the pensioners, because I happened to be the Minister for Community Welfare at that time. In my view they were given the consideration they so rightly deserve.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (the Hon. R. J. L. Williams): May I ask the Leader of the Opposition to quote the page numbers because this will assist the reporter?

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: Certainly, Sir, the quotes appear at pages 1225 and 1226 of *Hansard* No. 7. As I have already mentioned, the Minister said—

I cannot agree with the broad statement that pensioners should get the concessions they so rightly deserve.

He later reiterates that statement. Never at any time did I say that all pensioners should get a concession, because my amendment specifically points out that the pensioners who should be considered are those who are entitled to fringe benefits under the Repatriation and Social Services Act.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: Did not you read out your own reference to all pensioners?

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: The Minister was the one who was referring to all pensioners and later he claimed he did not say it. The Minister did say—

We grant them concessions on drivers' licenses now. This applies to all pensioners.

When I questioned the Minister on that he said, "All age pensioners". I told the Minister it did not apply to all pensioners and he claimed he did not say it did. The Minister does not seem to know what he is talking about.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: I have an idea that you were the Minister who said you could not do anything about concessions at all.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: We must remember that in two different places the Minister said in answer to a question that a committee had been set up. The Minister admits that. On page F2 of the Minister's typewritten speech he said, "The Government is in the process of setting up a committee to consider the granting of concessions to pensioners". But I questioned him on page F3 of his notes and said—

I hope you are going to tell us about the committee the Government set up a couple of months ago.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: That is the second time you have said this; are you going to continue to repeat it?

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: Because the Minister would not tell me I ask him the question three times. To my amazement the Minister then asked, "Which committee?" and I replied, "To inquire into the reduction of license fees charged to pensioners."

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: The committee was set up to inquire into all concessions to pensioners, not purely to consider concessions of license fees. By gee, you are trying to twist things.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: You cannot even read it straight.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: The Minister has as many twists in him as an old carriage bolt. He first said no committee was set up on the question of reducing license fees to pensioners. If no committee was set up—

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: It was set up to consider concessions for pensioners. You have already read it twice. How many times do you have to read it to get it into that old brain of yours.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: The honourable member should keep quiet.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: I do not need to do anything of the kind.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: A question was asked in the Legislative Assembly on the 31st July as follows—

Was the Minister correctly reported in *The West Australian* of today's date, where he was quoted as saying he is investigating possibilities of pensioner exemption from proposed increases in motor vehicle license fees?

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: So it is different.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: If the honourable member would let it sink through his thick skull he might find out the correct position. The answer the Minister

gave to the question which I have just quoted was "Yes." The second part of the question reads—

If the answer is "Yes", will he please explain why he informed me by letter dated the 22nd July, 1974, following a submission I made on behalf of pensioners in connection with the matter, that he cannot extend concessions to aged pensioners?

The reply given by the Minister for Transport was—

Subsequent to the letter referred to, Cabinet has set up a committee to investigate whether some special action can be taken to assist pensioners with the payment of vehicle license fees.

I suggest that Mr Lewis now keeps quiet for the rest of the night.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: I do not think I should at all. The Minister has answered your question correctly.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: When the Minister replied to my question in his second reading speech he said the committee had been set up and, later in his speech, he said the Government is in the process of setting up a committee to look into the reduction of license fees for pensioners. Of course it was the Minister for Transport in another place who said it had been set up. The Minister here then changed his mind and did not seem to know what the committee was all about.

The Hon. N. McNeill: You know perfectly well.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: The Minister said that no committee was set up to look into the reduction of license fees for pensioners. I then asked when will the committee be set up to look into all concessions that may possibly be granted to pensioners.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: That is what we have been trying to tell you.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: Now let us hear from the Minister. He first tells us that no committee has been set up and later he says the Government may set up a committee. I have never heard so much hogwash politics in all my life.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: Follow it right through.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: You make a big mouthful out of nothing.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I do not.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: You do.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: Here we have the Minister for Community Welfare who is supposed to have some compassion for pensioners saying this sort of thing.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: You had none last year. I got a blunt refusal when I wrote to you. You did nothing.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: The only concessions that pensioners have been given in Western Australia were given by the last Labor Government.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: At least we have set up a committee to look at all concessions. Did you do that?

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: What did the honourable member write and ask me to do?

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: I asked for vehicle concessions for pensioners.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: The Minister then said—

the committee will make inquiries as to what the position is in the other States; what concessions are granted to pensioners in those States, and what concessions we can afford to grant to pensioners in Western Australia. The committee will be inquiring into many aspects apart from the granting of concessions in the payment of license fees.

I then said, "What progress has the committee made? Had it been formed yet?"

Then we have another somersault and the Minister saying, "The committee is in the process of being formed." And the Minister replied—

The committee is in the process of being formed. We are awaiting the return of people who are outside the State at present so that we may obtain their consent to serve on this committee.

I remarked on the fact that it took two months to set up a committee! I say seriously to the Minister that when he is handling legislation, he should read through the speeches made to the Bill being debated. He should not take them out of context and he should consult with other Ministers for the benefit of his own goodwill in the Chamber.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: Of course, I am not perfect like you!

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I should not have to rise to attempt to sort through the jumble of ideas and miscalculations that he uttered in his reply. I cannot say whether or not he wrote his own speech, but he should at least check the comments in it against the speeches made to the second reading debate. I will leave the matter there for the time being because I think I have proved conclusively that he did not understand my remarks. He did not take into consideration people such as pensioners who must rely on their own private transport. Obviously he did not read Mr Kannis' letter to the Minister in another place, and obviously he did not read the reply given by the Minister for Transport to a question. Otherwise he would not have made such stupid statements. Now I come to the amendment.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: At long last!

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: If the Minister had shown some consideration and logic in his reply, I would not have had to spend this time on the matter. It is because of the failings of the Minister and the wrongful twist that he put on my speech that it is necessary for me to do this, and I will continue to do it if the Minister treats the speeches of Opposition members with such contempt and twists—

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: In the main I gave you a pretty reasonable answer to your speech.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: —and turns to try to gain political advantage.

The Hon. N. McNeill: You're not trying to gain political advantage—no, not by a long chalk!

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I will tell the Minister and anyone else when my remarks are taken out of context. Anyone who read the Minister's reply to my comments would think, "What sort of a nut made that speech?" Anyone reading my speech and the reply would see that the reply just does not make sense.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: It would to some people probably, but you just do not want to see it that way.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: It does not make sense to anyone with any intelligence. I will read my amendment so that the Minister will understand it.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (the Hon. R. J. L. Williams): Order! Could I ask the Leader of the Opposition to resume his seat. I wish to draw the attention of the Committee to the fact that there is a technical error in the drafting of the amendment. As it is only slight, it could be altered in the Committee stage. Could I ask members to look at the notice paper. They will see that the amendment commences—

Page 4, after line 6—Add a subclause to stand as subclause (c) . . .

This should in fact read—

Page 4, after line 6—Insert a paragraph to stand as paragraph (c) . . .

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I also made the point in my second reading speech that I had taken this matter to the Parliamentary Draftsman and he suggested the way it should be done. I pointed out that if the amendment were not in the correct position the Minister would have sufficient time to study it and even to have a new paragraph drafted if he was not satisfied with my amendment. The proposed paragraph I wish to add reads as follows—

(5c) Any person who proves to the satisfaction of the local authority that he is in receipt of a pension under the provisions of "Social Services Act

1947-1972" (Commonwealth Statute) or of a service pension under the provisions of "Repatriation Act 1920-1972" (Commonwealth Statute) and that he is for the time being eligible to participate in those concessions generally referred to as pensioner fringe benefits shall not in respect of one vehicle owned by him be liable to pay the recording fee specified in Part I of the Third Schedule to this Act and the local authority shall in respect of one vehicle owned by any such person charge only one half of the licence fee payable according to the scale in Part III of the Third Schedule to this Act.

So this means that when we referred to the total amount of registration for different cars, the recording fee of \$4 was part and parcel of that total, although in the Act the two fees are in different parts. It was therefore necessary for the amendment to refer specifically to the recording fee and then to the license fee applicable in the third schedule of the Bill.

The term "fringe benefits" is commonly used by both the Repatriation Department and the Department of Social Security which operates under the Social Services Act. People who meet the criteria for a pension in that they own a home, a motor-car, a certain amount of money in the bank, and a small amount of income, may not necessarily receive fringe benefits. A person may have money in the bank in excess of the specified amount as well as an income, and although he qualifies for a pension he may not qualify for fringe benefits. This means he would not be eligible for a telephone at a rebated rental, a wireless and television license at a reduced rate, medical benefits, or free travel on MTT and railway services—a benefit granted by the Tonkin Government. Another fringe benefit for pensioners is one free trip a year on Government transport to any place in the State. Once a person is in receipt of a concession card from the Department of Social Security he is entitled to receive these concessions by quoting his pension number. However, if a son or a daughter of age lives in the house with the pensioner, no rebate is given on the wireless and television license or the telephone account. This provision is strictly policed by the department.

The Minister for Community Welfare has the duty to see that the allocations are made to the various departments in the Budget. I feel, therefore, that this is a most opportune time to bring up this matter as the Budget will be introduced shortly.

The Minister again took my remarks out of context when I said that I had that very day lunched with the Speaker of the South Australian Parliament and our own Speaker. I asked the Speaker of the

South Australian Parliament what concession, if any, was given to the pensioners in South Australia. As I told members—and this can be seen in *Hansard*—he advised me that pensioners were given a 50 per cent concession on motor vehicle registrations, and I took him as an authority on this point. The Minister even tried to twist these comments a little when he replied.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: I did nothing of the sort. I have heard everything after that.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: The Minister should read what he said.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: You read what I have said now. I treated you very decently over it. I think you should leave this until the third reading stage of the Bill.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I will have a lot more to say in the third reading.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: Good.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: The pensioners who have to rely on their pensions, and who meet the strict conditions laid down for eligibility for fringe benefits, should be given some consideration now. From the words of the Minister for Police, the committee has been in operation since the 31st July. It is for that reason that I have asked about the deliberations of this committee. All the members of the Chamber represent pensioners, and they all want the votes of the pensioners when election time comes around. Yet we find when something can be done for the pensioners, some members are quite prepared to forget this. Now is the time for consideration to be given to concessions for pensioners.

The Minister for Health said—

I cannot agree with the broad statement that pensioners should get the concessions they so rightly deserve.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: The words you used were that they should get the concessions they so rightly deserved and I was referring to those words. You know that. You used the phrase.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I used those words in a totally different context. I was speaking about the concessions they already enjoy. I quoted that from *Hansard*.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: It did not appear to me from a perusal of your speech that you were referring to what they already received.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: The Minister could not have read my speech; he could have read an uncorrected copy. I made only one small alteration to the entire record of my speech. It is amazing that the Minister for Health could make such a statement—that he does not consider pensioners should get this concession.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: I did not say that at all.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: Perhaps I should get a copy of the Minister's speech; he does not seem to know what he said.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: Yes, I do.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: That is why I disagree with him. He does not know what was said. Let me quote again the Minister's remarks—

I will not argue with the Leader of the Opposition. I know what I said and I know what I did not say. I cannot agree with the broad statement that pensioners should get the concessions they so rightly deserve.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: Referring to the broad statement you made. You know that very well.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: The broad statement I made was made here tonight and was contained in my amendment on the notice paper.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: It was a broad statement by you.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: It was a figment of the Minister's imagination. I did not make any broad statement.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: Yes, you did.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I said those people who meet the criteria laid down in my amendment, and then Mr President called me to order and suggested I should deal with that matter in the Committee stages and I agreed with him.

I trust the Committee will accept this amendment. If it does not, as Mr Kannis has stated, many pensioners will be left stranded. They will have to sell their motorcars because they will not be able to afford these savage and vicious increases. This will be particularly so in the remote areas, where they will be at a distinct disadvantage. If the pensioners are not granted a concession before the Budget is introduced, irrespective of what the Committee decides, it will not come under consideration until the Budget session next year. This is totally unreasonable. As I told the Minister last night, once this Bill is passed there will be no relief for the pensioner because it has not been the policy of this Government during the time it has been in office to give relief to anybody.

If we examined in detail the activities of the Brand-Watts Government in its first three months in office we would see that it established more than 70 committees. However, we never heard the results of the deliberations of any of those committees. It was a way of fobbing-off people and I consider that, similarly, this committee represents a way of fobbing-off people. I trust the Committee will consider the amendment.

The Hon. LYLIA ELLIOTT: I support the amendment and I hope enough members in this Committee have enough regard for the financial position of the

pensioners to enable the amendment to be carried. The Minister has mentioned that the average increase in vehicle license fees is to be 65 per cent and that some increases are to be as high as 100 per cent. If we consider the sort of car probably driven by pensioners—say, a 1965 or 1967 Holden—we will see that the registration fees will increase from \$27 to \$46 a year. Another car driven by pensioners is the Morris 850, or "Mini". The registration fees for such a vehicle will rise by 71 per cent.

We have also been told that the increased revenue to be raised by this measure will amount to \$10.9 million. I do not believe there are so many pensioners in the community who would be eligible for fringe benefits that we could not afford to grant them a license concession, when one considers the amount of revenue which will be raised.

I believe the provision of license concessions for pensioners can be justified for a number of reasons. Firstly, a pensioner does not use his car as often as a person who drives his car to work every day. The pensioner may use his car only once a week to take his wife shopping or perhaps to go to church or to visit the family on Sunday. For the rest of the week, his car may remain in the garage and, therefore, the pensioner's vehicle is not responsible for as much wear and tear on the roads as cars which are driven to work every day and which are, perhaps, used at night as well. Despite the fact that the pensioner does not use his car as much as other members of the community, very often his car is vitally important to him and his wife. When people reach this age, very often they are physically handicapped. Many pensioners suffer from severe arthritis and cannot walk great distances. They may live a long way from the nearest bus stop and, so, cannot take the bus. If they want to visit their families, often a bus journey involves a change of buses, with a consequent waiting around in town. The pensioners just cannot do that if they are physically handicapped; it would be quite intolerable.

Secondly, many pensioners require a motor vehicle to take them on their frequent visits to the doctor. It is very important that a pensioner should be able to afford his own vehicle. A person on \$31 a week would find it very difficult to pay all the increased charges he is expected to pay in relation to his vehicle, such as insurance, petrol, and so on, and the increased fees proposed by this measure will make the cost of owning a vehicle prohibitive to the pensioner.

This Bill will also affect the low income earners who cannot afford to pay one year's registration. Most people in their position buy a half-yearly license and, therefore, they will be required to pay

the \$4 recording fee twice. I ask the Minister whether the Government has considered the lost revenue which would result if people find they can no longer afford to own a motorcar. The Government will not lose half the registration fee, as we are proposing in the case of pensioners, but will lose the total amount. This is a real possibility. The way things are going, pensioners may have to choose between necessities, such as food and clothing, and owning a motor vehicle.

The Hon. N. McNeill: Do you think the Commonwealth might have made a qualification like this?

The Hon. LYLA ELLIOTT: I think the Commonwealth is very generous when it comes to pensions and concessions to the pensioners.

The Hon. N. McNeill: I am not talking about concessions; I am talking about making qualifications as a consequence—

The Hon. LYLA ELLIOTT: We are not talking about the Commonwealth at the moment.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I suggest that members opposite have a look at the conditions attached to previous road grants. It may give them an amazing answer which would not be very different from this one.

The Hon. LYLA ELLIOTT: I find section 11 of the Traffic Act to be very interesting. We keep getting quotes from the other side in relation to this section.

The Hon. V. J. Ferry: I thought we were dealing with clause 6.

The Hon. R. F. Cloughton: Section 11 is to be amended by clause 6 of the Bill.

The Hon. LYLA ELLIOTT: Section 11 (5) states—

A local authority shall,—
Not may, but shall—

—in respect of one vehicle owned by any person, charge only one-half of the fee payable according to the scale in the Third Schedule to this Act where it is proved to the satisfaction of the local authority—

The first person stipulated in this category is a prospector; the next person is a sandalwood puller, whatever that is; the next is a *bona fide* kangaroo-hunter.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: Some Aborigines are sandalwood pullers.

The Hon. LYLA ELLIOTT: Another person eligible for this concession is a beekeeper. We could very well find that the people in these categories are rather wealthy and do not need any concession. Are we to believe that prospectors, sandalwood pullers, kangaroo-hunters, and beekeepers are more entitled to concessional registration fees than a person on \$31 a week who, during his lifetime, has made his contribution to the economy of this State?

The Hon. S. J. Dellar: Prospectors are in need of it, in view of the recent increase in State battery charges.

The Hon. N. McNeill: And the Commonwealth taxation assessments.

The Hon. LYLA ELLIOTT: I hope members will consider the position of pensioners and realise, as I am sure most members do, that they are in an increasingly difficult financial situation, despite the fact that their pensions have been increased. In many cases, a pensioner's car is vital to him. It is his only contact with the outside world. Most pensioners prefer to own a vehicle than to have a telephone. Very often, they cannot afford both and must forego a telephone for the sake of owning a motorcar. I support the amendment.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I support the amendment. I am a little confused with the reference to a beekeeper. I hope he is not one category which has been talked about in another place and will be given some kind of tax concession! I consider the amendment to be reasonable.

I should point out that every member of this Chamber, from the very day he or she is born, takes up indentures to old age. The vast majority of the people in this country, after rearing families and paying off their homes, do not have very much money left when they reach retirement age and become eligible for a pension. The people who are able to save some money towards their retirement will not meet the requirements set out in the amendment.

It is interesting for us to ascertain how many people will be affected. What many of us fail to realise is that the people of this country are caught in the grip of a world-wide inflationary spiral; and the more we twist, turn and panic, the further we are dragged into it.

In these days one hears various viewpoints advanced to remedy the situation. One such remedy is that if we increase charges and taxes, then by some miraculous means we would be able to straighten out the difficulty. In this regard I would ask what has happened in respect of the charges which have been increased by the present State Government as a result of panic action.

The State Government has moved very quickly in an attempt to meet a situation which may or may not arise. The Government has not examined fully the effect of the increases on the whole community. These very steep increases will have a detrimental effect on not only the pensioners, but on other sectors of the community. As a result of these increases we could find, in due course, motorcars being repossessed, or sold by their present owners. When that happens there will be much greater demand for public transport, with a consequent increase in the employment of people who serve the transport industry.

Every day we hear pleas that the Government should reduce its spending, and that such expenditure is inflationary. However, I have yet to hear someone say why Government money is more inflationary than money from the private sector. I do not think this argument is very valid if we relate it to the road grants question. On the one hand we have the constant cry by the present State Government, and by the opponents of the Federal Government, urging the Federal Government to reduce its expenditure. The amazing aspect is that those people do not say in which direction the Federal Government should reduce its spending.

Having regard for previous road grants over the years, I do not think that on this occasion the Federal Government has restricted the road grants. The Federal Government has been criticised for not accepting the advice to reduce its spending, but yet in respect of road grants the Federal Government is accused of being responsible for the very steep increases in registration and license fees that are being effected.

Sitting suspended from 6.06 to 7.30 p.m.

The Hon. D. K. DANS: I was speaking to the amendment moved by Mr Thompson and I said it would not cause any great hardship to the Government if it were to agree to the amendment. The people specified in the amendment would receive some relief from the savage increases proposed in the Bill.

Although it has been suggested that such relief may not be possible, I cannot really comment on what was said last night, when the Bill was debated, because I was absent from the Chamber. However, I have examined the definition of "pensioner" in the proposed amendment and it is evident that the concessions allowed under the provisions of this Bill will not apply to a great number of people. It is not my job to try to educate the Minister who is responsible for this Bill; he will be fully conversant with the definition of a "pensioner", but if he were to look further into the matter he would find that by acceding to the amendment he would remove a load from many people in the community as set out in the amendment moved by Mr Thompson, and who are the least able to bear the increased charges.

I am disturbed at the need for the savage increases, and the reason they will be imposed on the pensioners of this State. With your permission, Mr Deputy Chairman (the Hon. R. J. L. Williams) I want to let members know where we stand in relation to road grants because this has a considerable bearing on the final determination of the Minister as to whether or not he accedes to our request. I wish to read a brief letter from the Federal Minister for Transport, the Hon. C. K. Jones, addressed to my parliamentary colleague, the Hon.

R. F. Claughton. The letter is dated the 4th September, 1974, and reads as follows—

I refer to your letter of 3 July 1974 enclosing a petition on behalf of constituents in your electorate requesting that there be an increase in Australian Government road grants to Western Australia, in order that the increase in registration fees in the State be kept to a minimum.

That is what we are talking about now. To continue—

As you will be aware, on 18 July I introduced legislation into the Australian Parliament to provide \$126 million in grants to the States over the next 3 years for road development. Of this amount Western Australia will receive \$150 million.

The Government, in arriving at the total amount for road finance, had to take into account its proposed commitments for other major transport initiatives such as urban public transport. We also had to consider our commitments to other programs of high priority such as education, health and social welfare and, above all, the general state of the economy.

I think I traversed that area prior to the tea suspension. To continue—

The result of these considerations was that the overall figure of \$126 million is 16% less than the \$1345 million level of grants recommended by the Bureau of Roads in its "Report on Roads in Australia—1973". I would point out, however, that the allocation for Western Australia is only \$6 million less or 4% below the \$156 million recommended by the Bureau on the basis of roads needs in the State.

In addition, the Australian Government, after considering representations from the States, agreed to reduce by 10% the level of quotas which the Bureau of Roads had recommended the States meet from their own resources. This would have helped relieve Western Australia to a large extent of the responsibility of increasing user charges. In any case, of course, there is no requirement on the States as to where they raise their own road finance funds. That is a matter essentially for them to decide.

The decision to increase motor vehicle registration fees in Western Australia, and by such a large amount, may of course have been influenced by the fact, as I understand it, that there have been no such increases in Western Australia since 1965.

The fact remains that we are still to get a further grant in addition to the \$150 million which is to be made available for road development. Without that additional amount we are only some \$6 million

short of the amount recommended by the Bureau of Roads. I fail to see that it is necessary to make such savage increases in the area of vehicle registrations.

Other charges have also been increased and perhaps we have to accept that situation, as outlined in the letter from the Minister. Initially, the increases in vehicle registration fees will bring in an additional \$10.5 million.

The Hon. Lyla Elliott: The amount will be \$10.9 million.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: That will be over a full 12 months.

The Hon. D. K. DAns: That is correct. Surely that is an increase of nearly \$5 million. I urge the Minister to ask the officers of his department to have another look at the type of pensioner outlined in the amendment moved by Mr Thompson. An estimate should be made of how many pensioners it will affect, and what the concessions will cost the State. I would be surprised if the cost were \$5 million. The proposed increases will impose a burden on a whole range of people. I am more concerned about the pensioners who are entitled to the full benefits of a means test pension.

The Hon. V. J. Ferry: We are also concerned with funds for country roads.

The Hon. D. K. DAns: I have already outlined that situation and if the member had been listening he would have heard what I had to say and I am sure he would have been enlightened. He raises a very good issue: I am concerned about funds for country roads and the rural population, but I am also very much concerned about those people least able to afford this increase. The increase will hit everyone, including the members in this Chamber. However, the small number of people who would be embraced by the amendment would not affect the situation greatly, and I strongly urge the Minister to have another look at the position.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: I rise to oppose the amendment, but not because of any lack of feeling or consideration for the hardships suffered by our pensioners. The problems which pensioners face today, in our present inflationary situation, are indeed great. However, their problems will not be solved by proposals of the type now before us. There has been talk about things being in context, so let us put the whole situation back into context.

Firstly, why is there a need for the increase in charges—or the savage increase as it was described? To put things back into context, the real reason is that costs are rising so rapidly the State Government and local authorities are having difficulty in carrying out their basic works. The Premiers of the various States were told that the way to raise additional money was by doing just what we are doing tonight. That is where the problem lies.

The Hon. D. K. DAns: I was quite honest when I read the letter to members. I read the last paragraph which outlined the situation.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (the Hon. R. J. L. Williams): Order!

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: We will get back to this position each time the situation arises.

The Hon. D. K. DAns: And get nowhere.

The Hon. D. W. Cooley: That is the only excuse members opposite have.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (the Hon. R. J. L. Williams): Order!

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: The situation has arisen because the Prime Minister told the State Premiers to go back to their States and raise additional funds. It was a direction.

The Hon. D. K. DAns: And the member is telling us to cut Government spending.

The Hon. D. W. Cooley: The member opposite would not like a Prime Minister similar to the former Prime Minister.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: We have problems with the present Prime Minister.

The Hon. R. Thompson: You have problems with your Premier.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: It is necessary to increase charges severely because no other money is available. The State Governments have been told by the great Prime Minister where they should raise money.

The issue which has been projected into the debate is the situation of the pensioners. However why is it necessary for us to be considering the needs of pensioners; they are catered for by the Federal Government. Returning to the Federal Government, the reason for discussing the position of pensioners is because the pensions they receive are not sufficient for them to meet their obligations in the present inflationary situation. The whole solution to the problem could be alleviated by increasing pensions when the Federal Budget is released.

The Hon. S. J. Dellar: Just as well McMahon is not the Treasurer; they would be on the bones of—

The Hon. D. K. DAns: We are only talking about a small section of the pensioners.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: I am interested in all pensioners.

The Hon. D. K. DAns: I am interested in all the people of the State.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: As a State we are left to cover the bulk of the Commonwealth Government's deficiency. Consideration of the neglect of pensioners, in this situation, should be carried out at a national level and not on an *ad hoc* basis.

The Hon. R. Thompson: Why do we have a Minister for Community Welfare?

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: I am looking for an overall rational view of the problems of the pensioners.

The Hon. R. Thompson: The member had better talk to the Pensioners' League.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: To this end a committee will be investigating this problem.

The Hon. R. Thompson: Does the member know if the committee has been set up?

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: The committee will consider these problems and make recommendations. If it does not make recommendations I will be disappointed.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: The member will be disappointed, and so will we.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: It does not take very much to disappoint some members of the Opposition. This is evident because members opposite seem to be jealous of the fact that the present Government is looking at the problem.

The Hon. R. Thompson: Is it; according to the Minister it is not.

The Hon. S. J. Dellar: I hope it is.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: I should think the honourable member would hope. I think the Opposition is concerned that there is to be an inquiry into the whole affair.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: Can the member guarantee that? The Minister has not told us.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: The Minister has said that such an investigation will be carried out.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: It will be carried out?

The Hon. R. Thompson: When?

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: When discussion is completed on this amendment a vote will be taken and, similarly, when the Committee has considered the problem its findings will be available.

The Hon. R. Thompson: The member will be in Opposition then.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: Time will tell. I do not support the amendment because I consider we should have a rational viewpoint and consider all the problems and the areas where concessions are required.

The Hon. R. Thompson: The Government will grind to a standstill.

The Hon. N. McNeill: What rubbish!

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: We have really listened to something tonight.

The Hon. S. J. Dellar: We have just heard it.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: From what has been said by members opposite tonight one would imagine that the Government was a big bad wolf.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I have not said that, at all.

The Hon. N. McNeill: We have been in Government for only six months and we have had to clear up a lot of problems. This is only one of them.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: You are in Government. That is your job.

The Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I will not leave members of the Opposition in any doubt about my attitude towards this amendment. I will not accept it. I will proceed to say why. Firstly, it is an ill-conceived amendment in that it provides for one small section of pensioners—the most affluent.

The Hon. R. Thompson: The most affluent! You are a slow learner.

The Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I said the most affluent pensioners—those who can afford to own a motorcar. I still say the pensioners who own a motorcar are more affluent than those who cannot afford to own a motorcar; and this amendment is designed to benefit the more affluent pensioners. I do not mean affluent in the sense of being rich. This is a concession which will not be extended to other pensioners.

I have had many applications from pensioners' organisations for concessions of various kinds and the Government's intention is to set up a good and capable committee to inquire into the concessions that are granted in other States and to try to line them up so that we have uniform concessions applying throughout Australia.

The Hon. R. Thompson: You have told us three things—

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (the Hon. R. J. L. Williams): Order!

The Hon. R. Thompson: The Minister for Police has said—

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order! I remind the Leader of the Opposition that we are in Committee and he will have a chance to reply.

The Hon. N. E. BAXTER: The honourable member can get all the answers he wants at the third reading stage. Tonight I have heard three third reading speeches during the Committee stage. Three speeches were made during the second reading debate—by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Ferry, and Mr Gayfer. No other members rose during the second reading debate. If members want to make second or third reading speeches they should make them at the appropriate time, not in Committee.

I am referring to the amendment and the fact that we intend to inquire into the whole matter of pensioner concessions. If the Leader of the Opposition wants some answers to the questions he posed when he was speaking to this amendment—and in my opinion he was right

off the rails—I will give them to him at the third reading stage, but not now. I will discuss this amendment alone.

The Hon. R. Thompson: You are the person who gave me three different versions in Committee.

The Hon. N. E. BAXTER: The honourable member suggests that after six months in office we should agree to this amendment to the Traffic Act. To my knowledge, the amendment was not proposed in the other place, and for three years the Labor Party was in office but not one move was made to introduce an amendment of this nature, although several amendments to the Traffic Act were introduced.

The Hon. S. J. DELLAR: Not on license fees.

The Hon. N. E. BAXTER: All that members of the Opposition are doing tonight is hopping on the back of the pensioner in proposing this amendment. At the present time, a concession such as this has not been catered for in our plans, other than that a committee is being set up to examine all these matters thoroughly. It will take some time for the committee to collect all the data on possible pensioner concessions and line them up with the other States. Until we get the answers from a soundly-based committee, we are not prepared to accept the amendment.

The Hon. S. J. DELLAR: Mr Deputy Chairman, I seek your guidance. We are now dealing with the amendment. Once the amendment is disposed of, will I have an opportunity to speak to clause 6?

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: That is correct.

The Hon. S. J. DELLAR: The amendment moved by the Hon. Ronald Thompson has been outlined by him. It seeks to amend clause 6 of the Bill to make provision for a reduction in the vehicle license fees for pensioners. He stated quite clearly his reasons for moving the amendment. I am only sorry the amendment does not go further and provide relief to pensioners in connection with their motor drivers' license fees.

The Minister indicated that the amendment would benefit the more affluent type of pensioner—the one who can afford a motorcar—and that it is not an amendment which will provide assistance to other types of pensioners. That might be so but we are dealing with amendments to the Traffic Act to increase license fees, so naturally it will affect only the pensioner who owns a motorcar. I doubt that we could write into the Traffic Act an amendment providing relief for pensioners who did not own motorcars.

I am not climbing on the back of pensioners but in my electorate, particular in the north-eastern goldfields and through-

out the Murchison, there are many pensioners who require a vehicle because there is no form of public transport. The Minister may say the townsites are relatively small and there is no need for a vehicle because the pensioners can walk to the hospital and so on. But in these towns pensioners own vehicles because they like to be independent, and in many cases they may find it necessary to dispose of their vehicles. I think the Minister said we would find pensioners licensing the motor vehicles of their daughters or sons.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: I did not say that.

The Hon. S. J. DELLAR: I will withdraw that. I think that argument was put forward in connection with some rating measures. Pensioners are fairly independent types. They have worked their way through life and reached the stage where they retire either voluntarily or because of the age limit imposed upon their employment.

We are dealing with an amendment to the Traffic Act which is designed to give a concession to pensioners who own motor vehicles. The Minister has said he is not prepared to accept the amendment. He went on to say that we had three years in which to make such an amendment had we seen fit, but in the three years of the Tonkin Government there was no amendment of the Traffic Act which had anything to do with motor vehicle license fees.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: There were five amending Bills during that time, though.

The Hon. S. J. DELLAR: They had nothing to do with license fees because in that time the five-year Commonwealth Aid Roads Scheme was operating and was not due for review.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: This amendment could have been included in any one of those Bills.

The Hon. S. J. DELLAR: I suppose it could have been included in any of the amendments made during the 12 years prior to our assuming office, so we get nowhere with that argument. Here is an opportunity for the Government to demonstrate the sincerity of its election policy in regard to assisting pensioners and those who are elderly. The pages of the policy speech are not numbered, so I cannot quote the page number, but it says—

The Liberal Party is seriously concerned about the plight of retired people in an inflationary economy.

As they move into retirement, many of these people move into difficulty.

Some are on fixed incomes. Some live on pensions. All of them feel inflation badly.

The pensioner probably feels inflation more than anyone else. We might say the same of those on unemployment benefits

but in many cases they are quite capable of working if they want to do so. The policy speech concludes by saying—

They are the direct result of three years of close inquiry by our Parliamentary team and our Party in every part of the State.

So there have been three years of close scrutiny of the problems of the whole State, including pensioners, and this is the first time the Government has an opportunity to grant some relief to pensioners in accordance with its manifesto.

Mr Pratt has said the Australian Government could do a lot more to assist pensioners. The pension increases in the last 12 or 18 months have not been the best in the world, to my way of thinking, but under the circumstances they were much better than anything that had been done in the past to assist pensioners.

The Hon. N. McNeill: That is not correct, either.

The Hon. S. J. DELLAR: The amendment merely provides that pensioners who qualify will be entitled to a reduction of 50 per cent in their motor vehicle license fees and that they will not be required to pay the recording fee. This is one way in which the Government could demonstrate the sincerity of its attitude towards pensioners, and I trust the Committee will accept the amendment, although, from what the Minister has said, I have not a great deal of hope that it will be passed.

We are not getting on the back of the pensioners, as the Minister indicated, but we feel this is an opportunity for this Chamber, as a democratic chamber of review, to look at the situation of pensioners, particularly in respect of motor vehicle license fees, and demonstrate its sincerity by giving them some relief.

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: I can appreciate the spirit in which this amendment has been moved. I say that on non-political grounds, although I must admit the mover of the amendment certainly did not inspire a spirit of co-operation in me. In fact, he made me a bit cranky, as I am sure he did the Minister and other members, because of the attacks he made. I thought he was "nit picking".

The Hon. R. Thompson: I never get hot in a debate. I always know my facts.

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: If the Leader of the Opposition does not get hot under the collar, I would certainly like to see him when he is not cool.

I have considered this amendment and I agree with it in part, but not wholly. Cars are a luxury item, generally speaking, and if the average family looked at its budget—I am not referring only to pensioners—it would find it really cannot afford a car. It costs approximately \$28 to \$30 a week to run a car, and when I have told people this many have said to me, "What a load of rubbish!"

The Hon. D. K. Dans: It is a conservative figure.

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: It is a rather conservative figure, and it also applies to a late model car, either new or two or three years old.

The Hon. D. W. Cooley: You don't see many pensioners driving that sort of car.

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: That is true, although one does see some. This cost of \$28 to \$30 is something a pensioner cannot afford. As I have said, the average family cannot afford it. I carried out a test during my first six months in this place to determine whether or not it is cheaper to use not public transport, but taxis, rather than a private vehicle. I carried out this test for six months with Swan Taxis. I found it was cheaper to use a taxi at all times, even if only to go down the street for a pound of butter. Of course, it makes the pound of butter rather expensive, but when taken in the overall picture it turned out cheaper.

The Hon. H. W. Gayfer: It would be pretty dear from Derby to Wyndham.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I once knew a man who went from Wyndham to Derby to have a haircut.

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: I am referring to the average use of a motor car, and I based my test on an annual mileage of 10 000, which is about the normal usage. I know Mr Gayfer certainly would have an annual mileage greater than that.

In some situations a car becomes a piece of ancillary equipment necessary for the existence of some people. In some cases this applies to pensioners, and I refer particularly to pensioners and other people who live in remote areas and who do not have public transport available to them or shopping centres in close proximity to their abodes.

I agree with parts of the amendment, but not with all of it. For instance, if another proviso were included in the amendment to say that these people must offer proof to the local authority that they need a motorcar to travel to the shops to purchase goods, and also that no public transport is available, then I would agree with it.

The Leader of the Opposition mentioned my name earlier on political grounds; and I now point out to him that the previous Government did grant a worthy concession to pensioners. It granted the concession of free travel once a year for those pensioners who have access to public transport. That is a fine concession, but unfortunately it does not apply to all the aged pensioners in the State.

The Hon. R. Thompson: It was not my fault that not all of them got it, I can assure you of that.

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: It must have been the other members of the Opposition party who voted against it.

The members of the present Government made an election promise that they would grant some form of free travel once a year to pensioners who have no access to public transport. So it can be seen that, regardless of politics, we are all concerned for the pensioners and other needy people.

The Hon. R. Thompson: We will see about that when you vote on the amendment.

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: I can tell the Leader of the Opposition now I will vote against the amendment—

The Hon. R. Thompson: I thought you would.

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: —but not for the reason he may think. It is my intention to pass around an amendment on the amendment which I hope will be accepted by the Chamber. I think this will make the amendment more realistic. I have already given one part of my reasons for my amendment to the amendment.

I would like to refer to the tangles which any Minister for Community Welfare can get into when he has to deal with the Federal Government. Mr Thompson will remember that I wrote to him approximately 18 months ago requesting some concessions for pensioners because of the disabilities of remote area living, and with particular reference to a zone or district allowance.

The Hon. R. Thompson: And I beat you by about six weeks by writing to Mr Hayden.

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: I did not know that.

The Hon. R. Thompson: I referred to that when I spoke to the Supply Bill.

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: Well, I have been concerned with this ever since I have been here, as Mr Thompson will know. I put that proposal to him and he replied that it was a matter for the Federal Government.

The Hon. R. Thompson: It is.

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: I wrote to the Federal Minister (Mr Hayden) and he replied that it was not a Commonwealth matter, but one for the State Minister. When I advised Mr Thompson of this he said it was definitely a Commonwealth matter. I rose in this place and agreed with him wholeheartedly because I feel it is a Commonwealth responsibility.

I have said that all of us have concern for pensioners and needy people. My amendment on the amendment will, I hope, be debated in a practical manner without the introduction of party politics.

Mr Pratt made the point that the State needs finance. Surely we must all agree with that. He also said he considered the

overall assistance study being made by the State Cabinet is a good method of helping to solve the overall problems of pensioners. Once again, I would agree with him.

To settle some of the arguments which raged in the Chamber a little earlier in relation to this amendment, I would point out—although I realise I cannot quote the debate in another place—that if members look at the statements on pages 884 and 896 of the current *Hansard*—

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (the Hon. R. J. L. Williams): Order! I would remind the honourable member that he may not even refer to it.

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: I am sorry, Sir, that I referred to *Hansard* of the 27th August, 1974.

The Hon. H. W. Gayfer: Well done.

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: However, it would have helped members had they read it, and it could have saved an hour of debate tonight.

Mr Dans said that no-one in this Chamber had ever risen to explain to him why Government spending is more inflationary than private spending.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I hope you are on the right track this time; you had a number of goes previously.

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: I would point out for the benefit of Mr Dans—and this is relevant to the clause and the amendment because it deals with inflation, and that is what the Bill is all about; it is to cope with the inflationary problems of the State Treasury—that Government spending is more inflationary than private spending for the simple reason that Government spending is carried out with some of the moneys extracted from the taxpayer.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: "Extracted"; that is a good word.

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: The money is extracted from the taxpayer under legislation, and the taxpayer in an inflationary situation has less spending power in his pay packet. So he tries to gain more wages. The moment any worker applies for more wages up goes inflation again and up goes the price of goods; and we have an inflationary spiral.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: Would you agree that is only one facet of inflation?

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: I admit that. The difference here is that private spending is usually budgeted, and it is voluntary spending; whereas in the case of Government spending there is no option. So Government spending creates a greater inflationary situation in one that is already inflationary.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: You wouldn't suggest that Governments should not spend at all?

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: I would now like to present my amendment to the amendment moved by Mr Thompson.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (the Hon. R. J. L. Williams): I take it you will move the amendment now, and then speak to it?

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: Yes, Sir. I move—

That the amendment be amended by inserting after the word "is" in line 11 in proposed new subclause (5c) the words "dependent on the vehicle for transport because his place of residence is not in close proximity to public transport or shops and that he is"; and inserting after the word "pay" in line 17 in proposed new subsection (5c) the word "half".

I do not think I need say much more about the amendment to the amendment at this stage. I point out that if the amendment, as I propose to amend it, is agreed to, then in fairness to the Treasurer and the State Cabinet I would consider it to be fair enough if the total of the concessions granted to pensioners within a particular region were deducted from any moneys budgeted to be spent on roads within that region.

That is only fair, because members will appreciate that this is only my own view. Members will also appreciate why I put this forward. The Treasurer and members of Cabinet must make decisions on the expenditure of money for road works. Of course, the Prime Minister of Australia has instructed the Premier to increase public service charges. The Prime Minister has said that if we wish to carry out our necessary road works programme we need to raise further funds by an increase in public service charges. The Premier has done that and, because of that, I am suggesting we reduce the amount of money he was expecting and it should only be fair that concessions granted in a particular region should be deducted from any proposed expenditure within that region. I therefore ask the Committee to support the amendment on the amendment.

The Hon. D. W. COOLEY: The longer I sit in this Chamber the more confused I become.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: You will get used to it.

The Hon. D. W. COOLEY: I have seen a Minister in this Chamber introducing a Bill and then voting against it. I have seen members speaking against a proposition whilst there has been an audience in the gallery and then finally voting for it, and tonight I have seen a member speaking for a proposition we have before us now and then saying he will vote against it. Last night Mr Gayfer was speaking violently against the savage increases the

Government would impose on vehicle owners, and then he indicated he would support the measure. The situation is becoming a little confusing to me, to say the least.

I was further confused last night when I heard the Minister in charge of the Bill say that it was a luxury for a pensioner to be able to run a car.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (the Hon. R. J. L. Williams): I remind the honourable member that we are debating the amendment on the amendment.

The Hon. H. W. Gayfer: This is a second reading speech.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (the Hon. R. J. L. Williams): The honourable member's comments should be directed to the amendment on the amendment.

The Hon. D. W. COOLEY: Thank you, Mr Deputy Chairman. If I am making a second reading speech I am not the only one who has done so. I oppose the amendment on the amendment because it is selective and, in part, does not go all the way in relation to the proposition contained in the amendment put forward by the Leader of the Opposition. Many pensioners in our community depend to a large degree on their own motor vehicles for transport. Despite the fact that it has been said it costs \$28 a week to run a car, I do not think that argument is valid in regard to vehicles that are driven by pensioners who would be eligible under the proposition put forward by the Leader of the Opposition.

Pensioners come within a special category. They are not affluent people, as has been described here this evening. They are those who need a car and who live in circumstances that require them to have a car available so that they may subsist in reasonable comfort. There is no need to go to the country areas to realise this. One has only to visit suburban areas to find that people in this day and age do not enjoy the convenience of goods being delivered to them. In some instances even milk is not delivered to such people. Admittedly in most cases they have a bread delivery, but certainly groceries are not delivered to them and it is necessary for pensioners to have cars so that they may pick up their provisions. A car is most essential for people on pensions, who do not have the leg power to visit shopping centres and carry their provisions home. Therefore it is only fair that some consideration should be given to these people in the form of the concession proposed.

Great play was made in this debate of the plight of the poor farmers and what they have to put up with as a result of the savage increases that are to be imposed on them. I do not know whether this was said in a second reading speech or not.

The Hon. H. W. Gayfer: It was a second reading speech.

The Hon. D. W. COOLEY: I have learnt today that they do receive some consideration from the legislation; that they are granted substantial taxation concessions as a consequence of their using vehicles solely for the operation of their farms.

The Hon. H. W. Gayfer: That is interesting.

The Hon. D. W. COOLEY: It is, too. I do not know whether the information given to me was incorrect, but I understand that a farmer whose average income is \$10 000 a year—and I suppose there are a few farmers who have an income around that figure—

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (the Hon. R. J. L. Williams): I remind the honourable member once again that we are dealing with the amendment on the amendment.

The Hon. D. W. COOLEY: I am sorry, Mr Deputy Chairman, I have strayed away from the question. I return to the point that was made; namely, that there is no need for a pensioner to have a vehicle. I travel around the country a little because I have some dear friends in the country who are pensioners and if they did not have a car it would be virtually impossible for them to exist. I frequently visit the areas represented by Mr Ferry, especially the Augusta district. Many pensioners there have a fair distance to travel from their homes to the shopping centre in Augusta. They use their cars solely for the purpose of taking delivery of their essential commodities at the shopping centre which makes their lives reasonably comfortable. They are people on the basic pension rate. I do not think any pensioner could be claimed to be in affluent circumstances.

That is all I have to say on the amendment on the amendment. I do not think it covers the situation, and therefore the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition should be adopted. I ask the Government to take a benevolent attitude towards the people who are in need of some relief in this sphere.

The Hon. S. J. DELLAR: Mr Withers has moved an amendment on the amendment that was placed on the notice paper. With your concurrence, Mr Deputy Chairman (the Hon. R. J. L. Williams), I will read it to the Committee. After the word "is" in line 11 of proposed new subclause (5c) Mr Withers wishes to insert the words—

dependent on the vehicle for transport because his place of residence is not in close proximity to public transport or shops and that he is

Then the remainder of Mr Thompson's amendment follows. Mr Withers indicated he would not accept the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (the Hon. R. J. L. Williams): I believe Mr Withers would not accept the amendment moved

by the Leader of the Opposition without the acceptance of his amendment on the amendment.

The Hon. S. J. DELLAR: That is correct, Mr Deputy Chairman. There are many loopholes in the amendment on the amendment. For example, who will define the words, "dependent on the vehicle for transport because his place of residence is not in close proximity"?

The Hon. W. R. Withers: The local authority.

The Hon. S. J. DELLAR: How? By separate by-laws or what? This is an amendment to the Traffic Act and surely that Act should define the words "close proximity".

The Hon. W. R. Withers: It would vary, depending on the region.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (the Hon. R. J. L. Williams): Order! The honourable member will resume his seat. It seems perfectly obvious to me that the Committee is becoming bogged down. There is no question of deleting any part of the original amendment. This is merely an addition to the original amendment. The amendment on the amendment has to be read in conjunction with the whole of the amendment appearing on the notice paper. Mr Dellar may continue.

The Hon. S. J. DELLAR: Thank you, Mr Deputy Chairman. Let us forget about the reference to a vehicle at the moment. We still return to the point that this is an amendment on the amendment which provides that the pensioner's place of residence is not to be in close proximity to public transport or shops. The Committee may think I am being a little pernickety, but in parts of my electorate there may be only one shop in the town. Therefore does the amendment on the amendment cover situations such as this? Does it cover only one shop? There are two questions: Who is to define the words, "not in close proximity"? Will this be on a State-wide basis? We also have to decide whether or not public transport can be defined, and whether or not "shops" means one or more shops or just one single shop.

The Hon. M. McALEER: I will support the amendment on the amendment in principle because a situation of discrimination already exists between pensioners who have access to public transport and are able to travel freely on it, and those who do not. People in the country are obliged to travel great distances, and I do not think the amendment on the amendment will cover all that the mover may wish. I should imagine it is very difficult to frame an amendment on an amendment in the short time that was available to the mover. I support the matters mentioned by Mr Dellar. I would say that the use of the word "shop" or "shops" is too narrow for a decision to be made on whether a concession should be granted.

In my experience one of the reasons that a pensioner is in need of his own car for transport is because he has to visit doctors and hospitals and these establishments do not come within the definition of shopping centres. I support the spirit of the amendment on the amendment, but I feel it is a very difficult one to frame.

The Hon. V. J. FERRY: On listening to the course of the debate on the amendment on the amendment I am more and more convinced that it would be prudent for the Committee to reject both the amendment and the amendment on the amendment because there are so many complications and anomalies that the whole question of assisting pensioners with transport costs needs to be thoroughly researched so that we know the full consequences of any action that may be taken.

In speaking to the amendment on the amendment I appreciate its objective and the sentiment behind it, but it is apparent to me that it is not a practical proposition because, in part, it states—

not in close proximity to public transport or shops . . .

There is no line of demarcation. Who is to interpret what distance it would be? I do not think it is a practical proposition at all and therefore I am convinced that the Committee would be wise to reject both proposals—that is, the amendment and the amendment on the amendment—to allow the Government's committee to thoroughly examine the whole question with a view to coming up with a sensible, reasonable, and workable proposition.

The Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I can quite sympathise with what Mr Withers is trying to attempt, but he will make it ever so much more confusing to pensioners, and more anomalies will arise. What about the people who must hire a vehicle because they have no car and there is no public transport? Do we subsidise them in order that they might obtain a taxi because they are not in close proximity to shops or transport?

We must consider this situation on a broad face to decide what is best overall for pensioners in the way of concessions. It is no good dealing with the problem in a piecemeal manner as proposed by Mr Withers. I therefore trust the Committee will vote against the amendment on the amendment.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I have been waiting patiently to hear the Minister's comments. May I briefly reiterate some of the speeches made since I last spoke, particularly that of Mr Pratt.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (the Hon. R. J. L. Williams): Order! The Leader of the Opposition must speak to the amendment on the amendment.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I intend to do that.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: Mr Pratt did not speak on this.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: With reference to close proximity, I can probably appreciate what is close proximity although my version would differ from that of another member. I applaud Miss McAleer for the point she made, but we could go a little beyond what she said because hospitals, dentists, and doctors must be visited from time to time. However, I would still prefer to accept the amendment so that the Government is given the responsibility to settle the matter. We have heard this evening that the pensioner is an affluent person.

The Hon. N. McNeill: Who said that?

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: The Minister.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: No, he did not.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: He said he is the affluent pensioner—the person who can afford to own a motorcar. Is that correct?

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: I referred to the affluent section of the pensioners who can afford to own a motorcar. That is different from what you said first. You referred to the pensioner as an affluent person.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I would like the Minister to tell us the maximum assessable amount for a pensioner to qualify for the fringe benefits under the means test because he is the person who determines this. When he gives us the answer—and it is his duty to do so—then the Committee will have a better appreciation of what he is talking about. I have been waiting for him to do this, but he has not done so this evening. I hope he will explain in detail how the means test is arrived at by the department of which he is the Minister.

The Hon. D. K. DANS: I am getting very confused. I was pleased to hear the Minister at least give an indication of what he thought about the amendment on the amendment. It is not my duty to tell the Minister what to do, but if I were in his position I know what I would do. I suggest that the Minister should confer with his departmental officers to ascertain what is and what is not possible.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: If you could do this in a few days, that would be all right; but it cannot be done in a short time. I thought I made that clear.

The Hon. D. K. DANS: I am speaking on my own behalf now. We are in a sea of mud even on the amendment on the amendment because of some of the points raised. At one stage I was agreeing with Mr Withers and the Hon. Miss McAleer and then someone raised the point concerning the definition of "close proximity". These points represent all the difficulties which can be encountered.

Perhaps some members would like to go on with this issue all night, but if we continue in the present vein we will not get very far.

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: I rise to answer some of the queries raised. First of all, Mr Dellar questioned what authority would make the decision. As was pointed out, that is in the first part of Mr Thompson's amendment which I have merely amended. It will be the local authority which makes the decision.

The Hon. S. J. Dellar: On close proximity?

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: I will cover one point at a time. The local authority must make the decision as to whether the pensioner is in close proximity to suitable shops or public transport because the situation must vary in each climatic region. For instance, if a pensioner happened to be living on one side of Cockatoo Island—this is not the situation, but I am merely using Cockatoo Island as an example—and the shops are on the other side, and there was a half-mile distance between the two, the pensioner would not live very long—probably not even for more than one trip to the shops.

The Hon. S. J. Dellar: Not if he drives the kind of vehicles they drive in my electorate. Anyway, there are no private vehicles on that island, are there?

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: There is a great difference between the situation up there and the situation in the suburbs in a rather temperate part of the State. If a pensioner walked a mile in a temperate part of the State, it would be good exercise for him and his health would benefit; but if that same pensioner were to walk a mile on Cockatoo Island, in the Pilbara, or in the Kimberley, in the heat of the summer—

The Hon. S. J. Dellar: I know you said this was only an example, but how many pensioners live on Cockatoo Island?

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: It was only an example. I am not familiar with some of the south-west parts of the State and I do not know the kind of country there.

The Hon. S. J. Dellar: Bridgetown would suit the purpose perfectly.

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: I am a northerner and I am speaking mainly about the pensioners there. I know that in the Pilbara and the Kimberley for most of the year many pensioners, if they had to walk a mile would be extremely distressed and it would be the death of some of them. Therefore the responsibility will rest with the local authority to make a decision as to a reasonable proximity. The interpretation must be made by a person who is familiar with the region, and who knows where the pensioner lives, where the shops are, and whether public transport is available.

I think that answers some of the queries raised by the Hon. Miss McAleer and the Hon. D. K. Dans. In reply to the Minister I would like to say that not too many pensioners own a car in this sort of situation, but the car is certainly not a luxury item for those who do own one.

This is something which must be considered in a practical light. The actual cost to the State will not be as much as the Minister and others think it will because very few pensioners will be eligible. I think that covers all the points raised.

The Hon. GRACE VAUGHAN: Mr Withers has mentioned in a rather vague way the point I was going to emphasise concerning the small number of vehicles to which the amendment of the Leader of the Opposition will apply. The Secretary of the Pensioners' League has indicated that the number of pensioners who own vehicles is in the vicinity of 10 000. I think my figures are fairly accurate from what I have ascertained from the *Year Book*. My calculations reveal that some 60 per cent of pensioners in Western Australia are eligible for fringe benefits, as mentioned in the amendment of the Leader of the Opposition. Not that percentage of all pensioners would be affluent enough to own a car. This is stretching the imagination rather far, but we will allow that to be so. This would mean we would have only 6 000 vehicles. Again we have the qualification that the pensioner must be eligible for the fringe benefits and he would certainly not be able to afford \$28 a week for running costs for his car. Moreover he would have a vehicle which would require a much lower license fee, and I am sure the Minister would agree with me on this.

Therefore the amount of money involved would certainly not be anything near the amount the Minister perhaps already envisages, because of the two qualifications. One of these is the number of pensioners who own a car. The number would probably be appreciably lower than 6 000. Also the cars would require a license fee much lower than that for the average motorcar used simply for transport.

In regard to the amendment on the amendment, I can appreciate the motives of Mr Withers and I must echo what the Hon. Margaret McAleer has said. Many contingencies are associated with a pensioner who is dependent upon his vehicle for transport. He may, in fact, be living quite close to shops, but his wife may not be able to travel on public transport or walk very far. Therefore he needs his vehicle for transport.

Perhaps if Mr Withers had moved an amendment on the amendment which referred simply to a pensioner "dependent on his vehicle for transport", and deleted the remainder of it, we would be getting somewhat closer to the need, because all the contingencies could not be covered in an amendment on the amendment.

My experience with elderly people has been considerable and I have found that many pensioners are willing to forgo their food and drink and some of the other comforts, in order that they might keep their cars on the road. This is not an idle statement because it is, in fact, the sort of economic choice many pensioners make because the use of a motor vehicle is vital to their enjoyment of community life. They enjoyed that life before they were reduced in financial circumstances and by their physical ability to get around.

We have already made concessions to kangaroo-hunters, drawers of sandalwood, prospectors, and beekeepers. Surely we can also make a concession to those in another small section of the community who may be dependent on their vehicles not only for physical support, but also for the psychological feeling it gives them of belonging to the community. I support the amendment of the Leader of the Opposition.

The Hon. S. J. DELLAR: I appreciate the comments made by Mr Withers on the definition of 'close proximity'; that it should be left to the local authority to decide, though I cannot for the life of me see how it would work. Local authorities vary from one to the other; they all employ an executive officer who may have a different idea of interpreting the Local Government Act or any other Act with which he is dealing. There are some councils which may think that two miles would be a good thing and that four miles would not. There is no complete uniformity.

In dealing with the Traffic Act I do not think we can leave such a matter to the local authority, and even though the amendment on the amendment is included in the Act the decision will be left to the local authority. Assuming this is the case and it does occur I think we would need some other safeguard in the parent Act itself in connection with where we could insert a definition of "close proximity".

I am sure members will agree that we could not leave it to an individual shire council or to an individual shire or town clerk to deal with applications which are received by the local authority for a concessional allowance on vehicle licenses.

It is possible that I might be a shire clerk this week and license a particular vehicle; I might agree with the definition of "close proximity"; but in six months' time a new shire clerk could be appointed and on the license being submitted for renewal he may have a different definition of "close proximity". If the amendment on the amendment is to succeed there must be some definition of the matter.

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: I consider that every person in our land has the right of appeal and although I admit that what Mr Dellar has described could happen, surely the person responsible in the local authority for making a decision would hesitate about changing the con-

cession already given to a pensioner by some other officer. He would need to have pretty good grounds to do so. If he suspected the previous officer was too lenient he would have to make a decision.

The Hon. S. J. DELLAR: It might be his second cousin.

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: Such anomalies occur throughout society and we would be foolish to deny they do. I think most people—like those of us in this Committee—endeavour to see that the right and fair thing is done. It would also be known that any concession granted to pensioners in a particular area would be deducted from the roadworks being carried out in that area, because the purpose of the fees is to obtain money for roadworks. I also think the pensioners in the country areas would be responsible; they would know that if they drive a car sufficient money would be needed to spend on the roads.

The Hon. D. K. DANS: I have considered the amendment on the amendment moved by Mr Withers and while I agree with the words "dependent on the vehicle" the more I look at this the more I see how impractical it is. I would like to go further than that.

I cannot support the amendment on the amendment, but I will support the amendment moved by Mr Thompson. Human nature being what it is, a local authority in Meekatharra could define "close proximity" as five miles from the centre of the town while one in Kununurra, applying the same yardstick, could set the distance at 10 miles. One could well imagine the confusion that would exist if we multiplied such a situation all over the State. I certainly would not like to be a shire clerk or a member of a local authority in such circumstances. If we are to make some concession to pensioners in connection with vehicles that fall within the ambit of Mr Thompson's amendment this must be a general kind of absolution. It is no good trying to split it into regions.

I have regard for people in the country areas, but for some unknown reason we appear to forget the people who live on the periphery of the city and who have the same problems for a variety of reasons.

I am aware of what Mr Withers is trying to do, but I cannot support him because his amendment is not a practical proposition. I have had experience about certain things which are likely to happen if in someone's opinion a particular noise is great enough to disturb somebody. What disturbs one person might not disturb another; what might be close to one might appear to be at a great distance to another.

Accordingly I cannot support the amendment on the amendment, but I will support Mr Thompson's amendment.

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: It is obvious there is a majority of opinion against the amendment on the amendment.

The Hon. R. Thompson: Why don't you withdraw the words after "because"; leave the words "dependent on the vehicle for transport", and delete the rest of it?

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: I think this would make it looser.

The Hon. R. Thompson: It would not. The Minister must determine the criteria and I appreciate his position.

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: I appreciate that Mr Thompson is trying to meet me halfway as I was endeavouring to meet him. But if we accept the proposal put forward by Mr Thompson in regarding to amending my amendment on the amendment—

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (the Hon. R. J. L. Williams): Which I would not allow, I might add.

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: —this would make it loose in the extreme. My amendment on the amendment is loose but necessarily so because of the varying climatic conditions and terrain in this giant State of ours. It is unfortunate that I cannot bring myself to vote for the amendment. If I thought I could I would not have moved my amendment on the amendment. The amendment is to loose and in trying to tighten it I have made the amendment loose in another sphere; while Mr Thompson, in trying to meet me halfway has made it even looser. I hope the Committee will support my amendment on the amendment, because I cannot support the amendment moved by Mr Thompson.

Amendment on the amendment put and negatived.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: Earlier when I spoke I said I thought it was time the Minister indicated those who, under the policy of his department, were eligible for fringe benefits. I received no response and it is obvious the Minister does not know. It shows how much thought has been given to my amendment which has been on the notice paper for 10 days.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: Will you tell me why I should explain it and what bearing it has on your amendment?

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: It has a great bearing.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: Not as far as I am concerned.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: It has a bearing, because the Minister said the section of pensioners who own motorcars are the affluent section. Mrs Grace Vaughan pointed out some of the trials and tribulations of pensioners, and why they like to retain a motorcar while going without some of the other benefits of life.

Let us consider a few of the benefits under the Repatriation Act. The income of a pensioner under this Act is \$66 a fortnight. That is the maximum pension

payable, and if one receives something under this amount he qualifies for fringe benefits, but if he receives \$66.10 this negates his claim for benefits.

The maximum amount of money or property a pensioner can have to qualify for fringe benefits is \$400. There are many cars which can be bought for less than \$400, so I do not see how the Minister can say this is an affluent section of pensioners, because they can have \$400 and still qualify for fringe benefits. If they are married they can have \$800, which is double the amount. They could buy a reasonable car for \$600 and still have \$200. I am now quoting the Minister's own criteria for fringe benefits.

We then pass to the recipients of social service benefits. Aged and invalid pensioners receive \$51.50 a fortnight and are governed by the same criteria that is laid down by the Community Welfare Department. Single aged pensioners or invalid pensioners get a standard rate of pension of \$62 a fortnight and they must meet the same conditions as those set out in the Repatriation Act.

A widow receives \$31 and she is given an allowance for children under the age of 16 years. A Class "B" widow receives the same amount as a Class "C" widow. I think most people would know that she receives a pension for the six-month period following the death of her husband, though this is subject to a very stringent means test. Should she have any collateral at all she would not qualify.

Accordingly, we are dealing with a human problem. These people are not the affluent section of pensioners, they are ordinary people or they would not be receiving the fringe benefits that are laid down and, accordingly, a 65 per cent increase in license fees is a tremendous impost for them to have to meet.

I am quite sure that the Minister has not done his homework on this amendment, or on the Bill for that matter. We hear much talk about this Chamber being a House of Review, and the Committee should now review this provision. We should tell the Minister to come up with something concrete if he rejects my proposal. The amendment is sound and just. It is ridiculous to say that concessions were not granted by the previous Government—we did not increase license fees by 65 per cent.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: It did not give concessions on license fees anyway, be reasonable.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: We introduced every concession the pensioners have received.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: Every one? I will check that.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: When he spoke last night the Minister referred to some exemptions which are provided in the

Act. I pointed out that the only exemption in the Act was inserted by the Labor Government.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: I referred to invalids—the exemption is there.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: Well, I ask the Minister to find that exemption in the Act. We are dealing with a very human problem—a severe impost has been put on the pensioners. The Minister suggests we look at the broad aspect and says everything else must be gone into. However, in three years' time the pensioners will still be paying this 65 per cent impost on vehicle registration unless the Committee accepts my proposal to assist the most disadvantaged people in the community. Pensioners cannot raise their incomes.

Mr Pratt said earlier that the fault lies with the Commonwealth Government. I suggest that he should study the Social Services Act and the regulations of the Department of Community Welfare. It is no good Mr Pratt making unfounded statements when he does not know the background.

The Hon. N. McNeill: Was Mr Pratt advocating that pensions be increased?

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: He said that the fault lies with the Commonwealth Government.

The Hon. N. McNeill: Did he say that pensions should be increased by the Commonwealth Government?

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: That was the text of his speech.

The Hon. N. McNeill: Do not qualify it. You did not qualify your own statements.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I will qualify all right. The Minister for Justice should talk to the Minister sitting alongside him—he cannot even read what is said. The point at issue is this: the Committee should grant a most necessary rebate to the pensioners.

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH: The Leader of the Opposition has chastised this Chamber for not acting as a House of Review.

The Hon. S. J. Dellar: He did not chastise you at all—he asked what you were going to do about it.

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH: I remind him that when he sat on the Government side and we were debating the Supply Bill he was very quick to say that this Chamber ought not interfere with matters affecting the finances of this State. This amendment will affect the finances of the State.

The Hon. V. J. Ferry: He was very grateful for supply in those days.

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH: That is right, he has suddenly changed his tune.

The Hon. R. Thompson: If I moved to delete the concessions to farmers, would you support me? That would interfere with the finances of the State.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (the Hon. R. J. L. Williams): Order!

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH: The second point I want to make—

The Hon. R. Thompson: Have you made a first one?

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH: —is in reference to the remarks made about beekeepers, sandalwood cutters, and some other people. I remind the Committee that primary producers were not given this concession because they were hard up at that time. The concession was granted for vehicles which did not use the road, or which used the road infrequently. Practically every primary producer uses an old utility to go around the sheep.

The Hon. Grace Vaughan: Pensioners use the roads much less than other people.

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH: They still use the roads. At that time we wanted everyone to register cars so that they would be covered with third-party insurance. We wanted to ensure that these farm vehicles were insured.

The Hon. Grace Vaughan: You had better read the Act again.

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH: The Opposition is trying to bring in a side issue.

The Hon. H. W. GAYFER: I am very interested in the proposition before the Committee. Mr Wordsworth spoke about license concessions that apply to farmers, beekeepers, prospectors, and the like. Members will recall that this concession was knocked out because it was discovered that the utility used around the farm property was often the most frequently-used vehicle in the establishment. In other words, the son or daughter of the farmer or of the prospector was using the utility as an every-day vehicle. So consequently the minimal requirements in the legislation were jacked up to—

The Hon. S. J. Dellar: Thirteen hundredweight.

The Hon. H. W. GAYFER: I thank the honourable member—I thought that was the figure. We are all aware that problems exist with the proposition of concessions for pensioners. The principle sounds fine, but the problem is, will the pensioner register his son's car in his name?

The Hon. R. Thompson: No, he cannot do that.

The Hon. H. W. GAYFER: The Leader of the Opposition says the pensioner cannot do this but I have heard other debates on the matter. In fact, I distinctly remember hearing the gentleman who is now the Deputy Leader of the Labor Party say

that this provision has anomalies. I notice that this amendment was not moved in another place.

Perhaps we could recommend to the Minister that this principle of concessions should be part of the total investigation currently taking place into pensions. I believe it is rather foolish to include this provision in the legislation because it could break down in certain ways.

I have before me a letter from a pensioner in my electorate. He says he has no public transport available and that he lives 50 miles from a doctor. I am in sympathy with his problems, and in fact, I showed this letter to the Minister as this man resides in his electorate as well as in mine. However, we can see the possibility of loopholes in the provision.

The Hon. R. Thompson: I think it can be said that there are loopholes in every law.

The Hon. H. W. GAYFER: We know that, and we are always attempting to tidy up legislation. The Minister said that if registration fees are a burden to the pensioners, the matter should be considered by the Commonwealth Government. Of course, the Commonwealth Government would only consider it if the practice is universal. I gather from the comments that the pensioners' concession on vehicle registrations is universal throughout Australia.

The Hon. R. Thompson: No.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: Oh no.

The Hon. H. W. GAYFER: I am sorry, I have misinterpreted the remarks. I feel that the provision in the amendment could be open to abuse. However, I ask the Minister to look at the suggestion in the framework of the inquiry being held currently.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result—

Ayes—7

Hon. D. W. Cooley	Hon. R. Thompson
Hon. S. J. Dellar	Hon. Grace Vaughan
Hon. Lyia Elliott	Hon. D. K. Dans
Hon. R. T. Leeson	(Teller)

Noes—14

Hon. C. R. Abbey	Hon. N. McNeill
Hon. N. E. Baxter	Hon. I. G. Medcalf
Hon. G. W. Berry	Hon. I. G. Pratt
Hon. H. W. Gayfer	Hon. J. C. Tozer
Hon. T. Knight	Hon. W. R. Withers
Hon. G. E. Masters	Hon. D. J. Wordsworth
Hon. M. McAleer	Hon. V. J. Perry
	(Teller)

Pairs

Ayes	Noes
Hon. R. H. C. Stubbs	Hon. G. C. MacKinnon
Hon. R. F. Claughton	Hon. Cilve Griffiths

Amendment thus negatived.

The Hon. S. J. DELLAR: As I have said, clause 6 deals with amendments to section 11 of the principal Act and provides for the amendments to the schedule to implement increased motor vehicle license fees and transfer fees. I wish to make only a

couple of comments on this clause. It has been brought to my notice that shire councils, particularly in the pastoral area—I am sure this would apply to the farming areas of this State as well—are concerned that with these increases in motor vehicle registration fees the pastoralists no longer will take advantage of the situation to license two, three, or even four vehicles on their pastoral leases but instead will choose to license the family motorcar and, perhaps, one other vehicle which necessarily they must license. The local authority is concerned that with these increases in fees they will lose revenue because the pastoralists will license less vehicles and that perhaps the expected increase in revenue will not be as high as was hoped by the Government.

During the Minister's comments on the Bill he answered a query of the Leader of the Opposition with respect to the licensing of vehicles used for private purposes. I refer to utilities and panel vans in particular. In reply to Mr Thompson, the Minister said—

... utilities and vans are treated as light commercial vehicles, there being relatively few used absolutely for private purposes.

I query that assertion. In the township of Exmouth, many people have utilities and panel vans which are used for private purposes. This also applies in places like Meekatharra and Leonora, where sedan cars are not suitable because of the terrain. The people prefer to use heavy duty panel vans or utilities for private purposes. The Minister went on to say—

When the Bill was explained to members I pointed out that the annual mileage travelled by light commercial vehicles, utilities, vans and light trucks is approximately 20 to 25 per cent higher than for motorcars.

That might be the case if a vehicle is used for commercial purposes, but when it is used as a private means of conveyance it would not travel one-tenth of a kilometre more in any given 12 months than if the chap was driving a Mercedes-Benz or a Holden. The Minister went on to explain the basis of the calculations used to establish the higher fee for this type of vehicle.

Mr Pratt referred to the reason these fees are to be increased. Once again we heard the great bogey that it is the fault of the Australian Government. He went on to give us a dissertation about how inflation was caused, whose fault it was, and how it was affecting things in Australia. This morning I had the opportunity to be on a panel of judges, judging students on behalf of an oil company. There were 5 students present, and four listed inflation as the basic bogey affecting Australia today. I would suggest that the comments of the 16 and 17-year olds this morning in answer to queries made a lot more sense than the remarks of Mr Pratt.

The Hon. I. G. Pratt: Do you not agree that inflation is the bogey at the moment?

The Hon. H. W. GAYFER: I move an amendment—

Page 4, line 7—Insert after subparagraph (vii) of paragraph (b) the following new paragraph to stand as paragraph (c)—

(c) by deleting the word "a" at the end of line 1 of subsection (6) and substituting the word "each" and by adding to the end of the last line of that subsection the words "in respect of each such vehicle".

This amendment is designed to clear up an area of doubt. I am surprised that this has not been raised before; I referred to it in my speech on the second reading stage last night. Section 11 (b) of the original Act states—

A local authority shall issue a license for a tractor, other than a prime mover, that is owned by a person carrying on the business of farming or grazing and that is used, or will during the currency of the license be used, solely in connection with the owner's business of farming or grazing, on payment of a fee of four dollars per annum.

There is some conjecture that the word "a" could mean the numeral "1" in a court of law. I know that the Interpretation Act states that in every Act, every word in the singular number shall be considered as including the plural number. But when a shire clerk is looking at the list, without the Interpretation Act in front of him, I do not see how he can carry on the business of the shire effectively as the Act is now worded.

Every tractor should receive this concession whether it operates in orchards in the country or in city areas, but each tractor should incur a fee of \$4. We all know of orchardists who license their tractors for \$4 and who use them on their properties and to go down the road to get to another part of their properties. This is common practice. We also know that farmers often have six or seven tractors in operation. I would suggest in the interests of clarity that my amendment be supported. As it stands, the Act could mean that a fee of \$4 applies for all six or seven tractors owned by a farmer. We want to make sure that \$4 is paid on each vehicle, and not the lot.

The Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Unfortunately, Mr Gayfer did not arrive in the Chamber until after the House resumed. Inquiries were made into this situation. As Mr Gayfer explained, the word "a" means each vehicle. We have been in touch with the Country Shire Councils' Association and have been advised that shire clerks have interpreted this section of the Act correctly. In addition, it is set out in the

Interpretation Act. I have represented the Central Province for many years and I have never heard of a shire clerk interpreting this part of the Act to mean that the fee of \$4 covers more than one vehicle. The situation is the same in regard to inquiries about the new rates. The Country Shire Councils' Association has had no complaints concerning this. The records of the shire councils show that on no occasion has an officer charged more than \$4 for each truck. I do not think it is really necessary to amend this. It has been included in the Act for many years and is recognised by shire councils and shire clerks throughout the State. Each truck is entitled to be registered for \$4; there has never been any question about it.

The Hon. H. W. GAYFER: Shakespeare said, "The lady doth protest too much, methinks". I am not too sure whether there is not something else behind this. It seems such a simple amendment to prevent a mistake occurring. It may happen. I cannot understand why we do not set it out once and for all so that if anybody picks up the Act he will know what the Act is about.

The Minister said that he rang the Country Shire Councils' Association and they said the Act was being interpreted correctly and that everything is all right. However, this is such a simple amendment. We could correct the Act and tidy it up for all time. I suppose if an accident did occur, some lawyer would be brought in who would know about the Interpretation Act. But, with my amendment, this would be obviated. Somebody would not charge incorrectly and then suddenly discover that this section of the Act is explained in the Interpretation Act. It seems to me to be a very simple step to clarify the matter.

The Hon. R. THOMPSON: I support the amendment. I refer to an incident relating to a very experienced shire clerk who had been working in local government for some 35 years. In respect of one matter which was referred to him, I pointed out that he had to make reference to the Interpretation Act. He inquired what that Act was. That happened three years ago. I do not know whether all licensing authorities are aware of the existence of the Interpretation Act. I think that the amendment moved by Mr Gayfer will dispel any doubt. If the inclusion of the words will make the provision clearer then we should agree to those words being included. The amendment merely seeks to remove any confusion which might arise.

The Hon. S. J. DELLAR: I also support the amendment. The Minister has told us that in discussion with the Country Shire Councils' Association and other bodies he thought that no difficulty would arise in this regard. That might be the position.

However, when the section which is proposed to be amended was written into the Traffic Act there was confusion in my mind, and in the minds of many other shire clerks.

The amendment is a simple one. It merely spells out the provision in the clause, and stipulates that a farmer may license any number of farm tractors for \$4 each. One additional amendment to the legislation, which makes the provision clearer, will not affect the revenue of the Government.

The Hon. N. E. BAXTER: The Department of Motor Vehicles and the local government licensing authorities apply this subsection of the Act in granting concessions for the licensing of farm tractors and vehicles. I have been advised that the department will confirm this ruling in the next bulletin that is issued to the licensing authorities, so as to clear up any doubt on the matter.

One reason that I oppose the amendment is that the Government desires to have the provisions of the Bill put into operation by the 1st October. If the passage of the Bill is delayed by an amendment, and by the need to return it to another place for consideration, the issue of information to local authorities relating to the new scale of fees will also be delayed. This information should be supplied to them as soon as possible to enable them to send out notices in respect of vehicles to be licensed or relicensed on and after the 1st October.

Today being the 11th September, if the passage of the Bill is delayed, we find the Show Week will intervene the week after next; therefore the issue of information to the licensing authorities relating to the new scale of fees will be held up.

I trust that Mr Gayfer will not persist in his amendment. If a Bill is brought down next year to amend the Traffic Act, we will look into the possibility of including an amendment in accordance with his wishes.

The Hon. H. W. GAYFER: I wish that the Minister had told me initially how urgent was the need for the Bill to be passed. He has told us that because some anomaly may be created under the existing section of the Act, the Department of Motor Vehicles intends to send out a screed to licensing authorities to tidy up the position. Now we are told that they want the Bill to be passed in this House, without being amended, so as to avoid the need to return it to another place for consideration. If the Minister had said that initially I would have agreed with him and I would not have persisted with my amendment.

However, as an anomaly will be created by the exclusion of my amendment to the Bill, the Department of Motor Vehicles

intends to send out a screed to cope with the situation. For that reason I must persist with my amendment.

The Hon. N. E. BAXTER: There is no anomaly. To fit in with what Mr Gayfer seeks to achieve, I assure him that no decision will be made by any shire clerk to refuse to license the second tractor of a farmer at the concession rate. The Department of Motor Vehicles will make this clear. The department will make clear that the word "a" means any vehicle, so there is no need for the amendment.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 7 to 15 put and passed.

Clause 16: Third Schedule substituted—

The Hon. S. J. DELLAR: I refer to part III, section B of the third schedule on page 20 of the Bill. Will the Minister explain to me the reason for the inclusion of the passage—

For the purposes of ascertaining the fees under Section A of this Part—

- (a) the number of power units of a motor vehicle (other than a motor vehicle with a rotary type engine) shall be the number of horsepower calculated from the R.A.C. formula expressed as the whole number so obtained or such other formula as the Minister may from time to time determine;

If we are to adopt the formula of the Royal Automobile Club for determining horsepower, what is the purpose of including a provision which will enable the Minister, from time to time, to make the determination on some other formula?

The Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I do not have the information on hand. I could refer to the notes that have been supplied to me.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (the Hon. R. J. L. Williams): This appears to me to be a safety type of provision. Should the RAC go out of existence the Minister will have an opportunity to use some other method of determining the formula.

The Hon. S. J. DELLAR: That may or may not be the case. I would like the Minister to obtain the information, and perhaps he can supply it at the third reading stage.

The Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I shall obtain the information, and give it at the third reading stage.

Clause put and passed.

Title put and passed.

Report

Bill reported, without amendment, and the report adopted.

BILLS (3): RECEIPT AND FIRST READING**1. War Service Land Settlement Scheme Act Amendment Bill.**

Bill received from the Assembly; and, on motion by the Hon. N. E. Baxter (Minister for Health), read a first time.

2. Metropolitan Region Town Planning Scheme Act Amendment Bill.**3. State Housing Act Amendment Bill.**

Bills received from the Assembly; and, on motions by the Hon. N. McNeill (Minister for Justice), read a first time.

House adjourned at 9.46 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, the 11th September, 1974

The **SPEAKER** (Mr Hutchinson) took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS (40): ON NOTICE**1. FERTILISER***Gyplap*

Mr **BLAIKIE**, to the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Further to question 36 of Thursday, 5th September, would he give details of extent of trials undertaken to assess the utilisation of Gyplap as a fertiliser, i.e., tonnages used in total and per hectare, method of application, time of application, and soil types?

(2) Would he advise of any result or conclusion to date?

Mr **McPHARLIN** replied:

(1) Rates containing sulphur levels from nil to 72 kg per hectare were top dressed in autumn on to small plots of sandy surfaced soils suspected of being sulphur deficient. Total tonnage was less than one tonne for all trials.

(2) Gyplap was less efficient than gypsum as a source of sulphur in terms of sulphur content and no other harmful or beneficial effect was observed.

2. PROBATE*Family Companies: Governing Director's Share*

Mr **CRANE**, to the Treasurer:

In view of the urgency in the matter of restructuring family companies involving a governing director's share, would he indicate when legislation will be introduced to amend the Death Duties Assessment Act, 1973?

Sir **CHARLES COURT** replied:

The matter is still under study. I anticipate making a statement in the near future.

3. WATER SUPPLIES*Country and Irrigation Schemes: Losses*

Mr **BLAIKIE**, to the Minister for Water Supplies:

Would he advise the annual financial loss incurred by supplying—

(a) the country water supplies scheme;

(b) irrigation water, from the Wellington, Samson, Logue Brook, Harvey and Stirling catchments in each year since 1968?

Mr **O'NEIL** replied:

(a) Great southern towns scheme: Source Wellington Dam.

Year	Financial loss
	\$
1967-68	741 596
1968-69	905 448
1969-70	996 325
1970-71	1 296 480
1971-72	1 460 891
1972-73	1 727 722
1973-74	1 888 749

(b) (i) Waroona irrigation district:

Source Samson Brook Dam, also includes Waroona and Drakes Brook Dam.

Year	Financial loss
	\$
1967-68	123 048
1968-69	126 403
1969-70	141 899
1970-71	136 550
1971-72	129 702
1972-73	131 452
1973-74	151 160

(ii) Harvey irrigation district: Source Logue Brook Dam, Harvey Dam and Stirling Dam.

Year	Financial loss
	\$
1967-68	317 777
1968-69	337 106
1969-70	334 066
1970-71	471 254
1971-72	361 003
1972-73	374 566
1973-74	417 572