



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

THIRTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FOURTH SESSION
1996

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 28 August 1996

Legislative Assembly

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THE SPEAKER (Mr Clarko) took the Chair at 11.00 am, and read prayers.

PETITION - ALINTAGAS, REBATES

DR GALLOP (Victoria Park - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [11.03 am]: I present the following petition -

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled.

We, the undersigned call on AlintaGas to establish a scheme of rebates or discounts for senior citizens, pensioners and other low income earners.

AlintaGas is alone among the public utilities in not providing some form of assistance for low income earners and the elderly and we call on it to display social responsibility conducting its business affairs.

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

The petition bears 198 signatures and I certify that it conforms to the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly.

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

[See petition No 116.]

PETITION - SOUTH BALLAJURA PRIMARY SCHOOL, PEDESTRIAN CROSSING

MRS PARKER (Helena - Parliamentary Secretary) [11.04 am]: I present the following petition -

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled.

We, the undersigned, the parents of children of South Ballajura Primary School and concerned residents request that, should the school not qualify for an A-Type crossing under Police Department formula, we be entitled to a trial period of three months to assess pedestrian usage. This extended period would allow the Police Department to measure increased pedestrian activity in a range of weather conditions. This would give a more accurate assessment of usage.

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

The petition bears 462 signatures and I certify that it conforms to the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly.

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

[See petition No 117.]

PETITION - ALINTAGAS, REBATES

MR CUNNINGHAM (Marangaroo) [11.05 am]: I present the following petition -

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled.

We, the undersigned petitioners:

1. Call on the State Government to arrange with AlintaGas to provide a 50% Rebate to Pensioners on the first 10 units of gas used by them each day.
2. Call on the State Government to pay for this by rebating to AlintaGas, a proportion of the State Government's levy on AlintaGas.

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

The petition bears 67 signatures all the way from Albany and I certify that it conforms to the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly.

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

[See petition No 118.]

PETITION - UNIVERSITY FUNDING CUTS, HIGHER EDUCATION CONTRIBUTION SCHEME CHARGES

DR GALLOP (Victoria Park - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [11.06 am]: I present the following petition -

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled.

We the undersigned petitioners call on the State Parliament and State Government to vigorously oppose the Howard Government's forecast cuts to University funding and the proposed increases in Higher Education Contribution Scheme charges on the grounds that they would severely undermine the nation's education capacity, threaten equal opportunities and damage exports now worth \$1.7 billion a year.

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

The petition bears 16 signatures and I certify that it conforms to the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly.

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

[See petition No 119.]

PETITION - ALBANY AND CANNING HIGHWAYS, LINK ROAD SUPPORT

DR GALLOP (Victoria Park - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [11.07 am]: I present the following petition -

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled.

We the undersigned petitioners support the provision of a link road between Albany Highway and Canning Highway in that it will have long-term social and environmental benefits for the Victoria Park area and call on the State Government to provide a definite timetable and commit funds for the construction of the road as soon as possible.

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

The petition bears three signatures and I certify that it conforms to the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly.

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

[See petition No 120.]

STATEMENT - PREMIER

Commonwealth Games 2006 Bid

MR COURT (Nedlands - Premier) [11.08 am] - by leave: During the parliamentary recess there has been a considerable amount of discussion about Western Australia's bid for the 2006 Commonwealth Games. Questions have been raised both inside and outside the Parliament in relation to the "endorsement contract" which need to be answered. I take this opportunity to inform members of the circumstances that led to Western Australia's bid being ruled out of contention without even having the opportunity to present our bid have it judged on its merit. It should also be noted that the South Australian bid was similarly ruled out of contention. This information is provided to the Parliament in respect of the conduct and operation of the Ministry of Sport and Recreation, the Minister and the Premier on behalf of the State, in dealing with the Australian Commonwealth Games Association.

Because of major deficiencies in the Australian Commonwealth Games Association's "endorsement contract" the Government would not sign it by 31 July 1996 as belatedly requested. Because the coalition Government stood up for the people of this State, because it refused to enter into an open-ended liability without any proper controls and accountability to the State's taxpayers, Western Australia has been ruled out of the bidding process. The Australian Commonwealth Games Association changed the rules in midstream and despite February 1996 advice that "should their application be successful, applicants will agree to sign an Endorsement Contract as provided by the ACGA", it subsequently insisted that the contract be signed in advance of selection.

Mr Thomas: How much money have you lost on this one?

Mr COURT: I suggest the member listen because it should be of interest to him.

The Western Australian Government, at its 2 June meeting with the association, expressed concerns about the unlimited financial implications of the contract. We therefore took particular note of the association's letter of 27 June 1996, which accompanied a revised endorsement contract, and which urged -

... you are advised to completely review the Contract to ensure you fully understand its total effect.

We did understand the contract's total effect. We understood that in signing it, and ignoring our own high standards of accountability, the Government would have exposed the State's taxpayers to an open-ended financial liability. Typifying this is clause 5.3.3 of the endorsement contract which requires the bid committee to -

. . . pay for or reimburse the Association for all reasonable expenses incurred by the Association in connection with the preparation, prosecution, promotion and presentation of the Candidature;

This is just an open cheque in the association's favour at the expense of the State. It has no details and no absolute upper limit of expenditure. This is on top of the preceding clause requiring the bid committee to -

. . . expend such sum as is necessary and appropriate to achieve the best possible Candidature . . .

The sum of \$5m is mentioned; however, this is in April 1996 terms and is simply an estimate.

Other clauses, such as clause 6.3(b), would have bound the State to pay all of the bid committee's expenses in relation to the candidature and all of the bid committee's liabilities to the association. Clause 7.17 would have required the State to be responsible for all expenses had the association chosen to take legal proceedings in the bid committee's name, and this could be done without the need to consult or even advise the bid committee.

In the event of the bid being successful, clause 10.3 of the contract would require the organising committee to pay the association \$10m on 1 January 2003 and \$5m on 1 January 2004. These figures are in April 1996 terms. CPI increases between the March quarter 1996 and the date of payment could double this amount. This payment is in consideration of the association surrendering its marketing and fundraising rights to the organising committee. It does not stop there.

The organising committee also must pay the association 20 per cent of gross receipts of the joint marketing program. If the costs of running that program were relatively high in relation to receipts, say 85 per cent, the organising committee would have to pay the association money that it would not have.

Other clauses would have required the State to underwrite any shortfall; given the association a role in approving or determining the charges or rentals for state owned facilities; effectively negated the rights of the State to refuse any expenditure of the organising committee; released the association from any liability to the State, the bid committee or the organising committee, except for negligence or wilful default; denied the State any right of action if the association breached the contract; given the association the right to terminate the contract without a similar right being extended to the State; and represented a wide ranging indemnity required of the State's taxpayers. In fact, clause 8.8 requires that -

The State shall at times be liable to the fullest extent permitted by law for all actions, statements, representations or omissions by the Organising Committee.

The cumulative effect of the contractual provisions would seem effectively to negate any rights to the State to say no to any expenditure of the organising committee. These implications of the contract have also been recognised by the South Australian Premier, Mr Dean Brown, who said that the association had demanded that his State "completely underwrite" the cost of the games. The South Australian bid committee agreed with Mr Brown saying that -

The controversial endorsement contract which cost Adelaide its chance to host the 2006 Commonwealth Games was seriously flawed.

It is quite clear, therefore, that this Government is not alone in finding serious fault with the contract.

I am greatly disappointed that Western Australia has been denied the opportunity to pursue its bid. Bringing the Commonwealth Games to Perth in 2006 was something the Government keenly sought. Western Australia's bid was recognised by many commentators as arguably the best and by refusing to consider it further, the association is denying Australian and commonwealth sport the best possible choice. However, the Government is committed to observing proper standards of accountability and whether it is the Commonwealth Games, or anything else, that is exactly what it will deliver.

[See paper No 452.]

DR GALLOP (Victoria Park - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [11.15 am]: Is it not convenient to use the Australian Commonwealth Games Association Inc as the excuse for what has been a monumental disaster of planning and management on the part of this Government? The Premier did not tell us two things about the Government's handling of this issue. The first is when he knew about this endorsement contract and the second is when it was finally decided to seek Crown Law advice on it. Is it not interesting that when he delivers this major statement he does not tell us when Crown Law advice was sought? The second issue he did not tell this Parliament about today is the nature of the bid that the Government of Western Australia made in the first place.

The truth of this issue is that the bid by the Government was badly handled. The Government of Western Australia was over the top and overcapitalised in its bid, and as time went on it was looking for an excuse to get out of it. The

excuse finally given to the Government by the Commonwealth Games Association was in the form of the endorsement contract. I will go through each of those points in turn: The first is the Government's management of the endorsement contract and whether the Premier of this State has any credibility at all as an economic manager.

Mr Court: Does it meet your standards of accountability?

Dr GALLOP: We will come to that, Premier.

In early May the Commonwealth Games Association made it clear to the Government that an endorsement contract had to be signed, and the deadline for that, which had originally been 30 June, was extended to 31 July. The Government knew about that in May. In fact, it would have known in February, when it first announced it would enter into this process, that endorsement contracts of this type are normal. They have been signed by Sydney for the Olympic Games and they will be signed by Victoria for the Commonwealth Games.

Mr Court: Did you listen to my statement? The Commonwealth Games organising committee said in February that we did not have to sign the endorsement contract until we were chosen, so the member for Victoria Park should get his facts right.

Dr GALLOP: That was the most pathetic point that the Premier made in his speech. All bids for these games require contracts of this type. The Premier knew that in February.

Mr Court: Would you sign it?

Dr GALLOP: I am not saying that. I will get to that issue, and I will answer it.

The SPEAKER: Order! There are far too many interjections coming from my right. It is the practice of this House since ministerial statements were introduced that very few interjections are tolerated during the ministerial statement or the reply. One person did make some interjections on the Premier's comments. I called that person to order and that person came to order. It is intolerable if people ignore that practice. It is important for us to hear the ministerial statement. Ministerial statements and the process of a reply are an extremely good idea, and I do not expect many interjections.

Dr GALLOP: The Government knew in February that this type of endorsement contract was part of the process. In early June a meeting was held with the Commonwealth Games Association. The Premier did not tell this House about that meeting and the extent to which the Government of Western Australia's representatives at that meeting indicated fundamental objections to that contract. Did they make fundamental objections to this contract of the sort that the Premier has outlined in his statement today?

Mr Court: They did.

Dr GALLOP: The Opposition will call for the tabling of all documents from that meeting. Following that meeting in late June, as a result of some issues around the contract that were raised by various people in the June meeting, the contract was revised. On 27 June all the States were given the revised contract. However, it was not until late July that the people of Western Australia were first brought into contact with this issue courtesy of the Government of Western Australia. Between 27 June, when the Government received that revised contract, and late July when it pulled out of the process, it announced its \$300m bid. The Government did not bother to tell anyone that there was a major problem with the bid. The Government did not take into consideration that the people of Western Australia might be concerned about the endorsement contract. It decided to keep it a secret. The Premier should not come into this Parliament and lecture the Opposition about accountability. Where was its accountability when it launched the bid in late June? It did not exist. I come to the real issue - the Western Australian bid. It is a joke bid.

Mr Court: Supported by your Leader of the Opposition.

Dr GALLOP: No it was not. The Premier said -

Because the coalition Government stood up for the people of this State, because we refused to enter into an open-ended liability, without any proper controls and accountability to the State's taxpayers, Western Australia has been ruled out of the bidding process.

The Opposition ruled Western Australia out of the bidding process when the Government submitted its bid. It did so because the bid failed to meet all the criteria. The bid of \$300m for the Commonwealth Games was twice, and in some cases three times, the amount submitted by the other States bidding at that time. It involved another 60 000 seat stadium in the inner city area to the tune of \$165m, for which there was no guaranteed use after the Commonwealth Games. The Premier lectures the Australian Commonwealth Games Association and the Opposition on accountability and financial probity, but it intended to build a stadium for which there was no guaranteed use after the games. When did the Western Australian Cricket Association, the West Australian Football Commission and the Western Australian Turf Club know about this wonderful bid from the Government? They knew a couple of days beforehand. In the Turf Club only the Government's friend, Wilson Tuckey, knew about it.

The bid was overcapitalised. It was not sustainable. It represented a drain on the State's taxation resources which could not be met, and there were signs of concern from some members of the Government on this issue. They wanted to know how the Government could escape from the public relations imbroglio in which the Premier had involved it. We all know he is the Premier of the big statement and the Sunday afternoon public relations exercise. It is interesting to note that even the public relations exercise was mucked up, with half the invited people going to one venue and the other half to a different venue. That is an indication of the nature of the bid. It was always a public relations exercise. The Government invited people to see how good it was with its beautiful plan to spend more money on the inner city area. At the same time the suburbs are desperately in need of infrastructure and resources to meet the challenges they face. Some members in the Government were nervous about this bid. I ask the Premier a simple question: When did he go to Crown Law for advice?

Mr Court: We have been seeking advice the whole way through on the endorsement contract.

Dr GALLOP: When did the Premier go to Crown Law for advice? It is a simple question.

Mr Court: The committee has sought advice the whole way through.

Dr GALLOP: When did the Premier go to Crown Law for advice?

Mr Court: I personally do not get the advice like that.

Dr GALLOP: It is interesting that the Premier will not answer that question. The bid was over the top and could not be guaranteed without the use of taxpayers' money into the future, for which there are endless possibilities. It would involve another inner city stadium this State does not need. When the ACGA insisted on the endorsement contract, Government members were pleased they got out of this horrible imbroglio into which the Premier and his public relations people had got them. I bet some members of Cabinet said to themselves, "Thank goodness we have escaped from this one." They would have recognised that, yet again, the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet had been playing its games and they were pleased that Crown Law got them out of it. Members opposite will be aware that this issue can be approached in only two ways. The first is to build on existing resources, which is always the preferred option, and the second is to look into the future to determine where resources may be needed in the outer suburbs and link the bid into the provision of those facilities. They were the best two options, not the building of another stadium in the inner city area. I am surprised the Premier had the gall to come into this Parliament and blame the Australian Commonwealth Games Association. Its position has been clear from the start. It has done what other games associations throughout the world do when asking for bids; that is, provide an endorsement contract of this type. It is no good blaming the ACGA. The Premier knew about this from the word go. He did not tell the people of Western Australia, when he should have told them, that this was a problem with the bid. Therein lies the failure in the Premier's accountability. The second failure in accountability is that the bid submitted was not sustainable or financially responsible. Evidence for that can be seen from *The West Australian*, which initially gave the bid tremendous support, but then received an enormous amount of comment from people involved in sport in Western Australia. I refer to experts such as Geoff Christian, whom many of us listen to on ABC radio on Saturday morning when he does the football program with George Grljusich. That is some of the best broadcasting in Western Australia. Their commentary on sport is second to none, and Geoff Christian made the valid point that this bid was overcapitalised and the Government was able to get out of it because of the problems with the endorsement contract.

Of course, all Governments are now obliged to look at endorsement contracts to determine whether they are a price worth paying for this type of event. Of course, that question should be considered. However, the Premier should have looked at it in February when he told the people what a wonderful Government this is. The Premier should have told the community about it in May when the ACGA said the Government had until 31 July to make a decision.

The Premier should have told the community about it on 27 June when the association wrote and advised the Government it had to sign the contract on the basis of slight revisions made to it. That is the Government's failure to be accountable. The member for Cockburn pointed out that the Premier has not advised Parliament in his statement of the cost of this bid to the taxpayers of Western Australia so far, for architectural and other fees, public relations, and the involvement of the Ministry of Sport and Recreation, and what has been the cost to the reputation of Western Australia in the sporting community.

I am pleased the Premier raised this issue in the Parliament today. He has failed the accountability test. The Government of Western Australia was rescued by Arthur Tunstall and his friends in the Australian Commonwealth Games Association. The Premier was rescued by the endorsement contract. They saved the Premier the embarrassment of a financially irresponsible bid.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE COMMISSION ON GOVERNMENT

Leave to Meet when House is Sitting, Wednesday, 28 August

On motion by Mr C.J. Barnett (Leader of the House), resolved -

That this House grants leave for the Joint Standing Committee on the Commission on Government to meet when the House is sitting on Wednesday, 28 August.

BILLS (4) - INTRODUCTION AND FIRST READING

1. Appropriation (Consolidated Fund) Bill (No 3)
2. Appropriation (Consolidated Fund) Bill (No 4)

Bills introduced, on motions by Mr Court (Treasurer) and read a first time.

3. Revenue Laws Amendment (Assessment) Bill (No 2)
4. Statutes (Repeals and Minor Amendments) Bill

Bills introduced, on motions by Mr Court (Premier), and read a first time.

RAILWAY DISCONTINUANCE BILL

Second Reading

MR LEWIS (Applecross - Minister for Planning) [11.33 am]: I move -

That the Bill be now read a second time.

The coalition policies of the 1990s for the south west include a proposal to relocate the *Australind* passenger rail service back to the Bunbury town centre. Following a study into alternative site locations, it was decided that the existing station be retained until a new station can be justified on the north edge of the town centre at Clifton Street and that land be set aside in the harbour city development for this future passenger station. Rail access to the new station can be provided via the freight connection to the land backed harbour.

That decision meant that the railway reserve between Wollaston Station and its terminus near Stirling Street could be declared surplus. The purpose of this railway discontinuance Bill is to enable disposal of the land in that railway reserve to occur.

With regard to disposal of the surplus railway reserve, the City of Bunbury has made strong representations for the section between Stirling Street and Sandridge Road to be vested with the city. The city has reconstructed Blair Street Boulevard between Stirling Street and Ward Street as a divided four lane road with service roads and the upgrading of major intersections. This was possible by the application of section 105 of the Public Works Act, the change of use of the land being gazetted on 3 March 1995. The city required the section between Ward Street and Sandridge Road to be vested for drainage purposes to fit with the overall Bunbury drainage strategy.

The City of Bunbury subsequently agreed to a variation of the above requirement, which allows for the creation of land and sale by the Government of commercial lots, in addition to the drainage requirement. These lots can be created only between Ward Street and Sandridge Road because of the spatial requirement for roadworks north of Ward Street. The new lots are on the section of reserve which has high potential value because of its exposure to Blair Street and Sandridge Road.

Also, the City of Bunbury is keen to have the Sandridge Road to Hawkins Street section of the reserve subdivided and disposed of in accordance with the city planning scheme. This will generate income for the Government and comply with the town planning requirement of the city.

It is envisaged that the net value of the net commercial lots north of Sandridge Road is \$500 000 and disposal of land between Sandridge Road and Hawkins Street has the potential to provide an income of \$250 000. These financial projections are subject to detailed analysis and design, and costs which may be incurred in service relocation. I have pleasure in commending the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Ms Warnock.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 27 August.

MR TUBBY (Roleystone - Parliamentary Secretary) [11.36 am]: I thank the members of the Opposition for their contribution to the debate, although I am a little disappointed that they will not support this legislation. Most of the objections were based on misinformation, probably because most members did not seem to have read the Bill, although a few had. When all was boiled down, the main concern was the fact that this Bill will abolish the State Employment and Skills Development Authority and thereby abandon the tripartite structure for the training sector.

I will speak briefly about the broad issues of TAFE and the training sector and focus on some of the major issues raised by members rather than respond to each member's speech in turn.

Times have changed within the training arena and within TAFE. A little more than 30 years ago I attended TAFE because I was training as a manual arts teacher. In those days we went to all the different TAFE colleges such as Perth Technical College in St George's Terrace. One of the courses was graphic arts related to the printing industry. We were confronted with a very large box comprising about 100 different divisions containing little pieces of lead. In those days in order to make up a printing plate one had to know where every piece of lead was placed so that one could pick up the different letters of the alphabet and punctuation marks, etc. Some members may have watched *The Man From Snowy River* on television. The technique I studied at Perth Technical College had not changed a great deal from the printing press which was depicted on that TV show.

Mr Brown: I was there at about the same time.

Mr TUBBY: That trade has since been wiped out. These days copy is keyed into a word processor then sent down the line to the printing press where the plates are made up automatically and from which copy is finally printed.

Mr Graham: That change took place 25 years ago.

Mr TUBBY: It was about five years after I had learned all the components in the box. The same advancement in technology is reflected in other areas. If members were to look under the bonnet of their car, they would see that the engines are almost unrecognisable compared with the cars they owned 20 years ago. In those days, to hot up a car's engine we would shave down the head and add a double barrel carburettor and some extractors. To hot up a modern car we would go to a computer expert who would change the chip on the vehicle's computerised microprocessor.

Times have changed, and unfortunately in many cases people have not been able to adapt to the changes. TAFE has had to change over the years to accommodate the new training requirements of industry. It has been very difficult for TAFE lecturers to keep up to date with what is happening because the changes have taken place so rapidly. That has required the TAFE sector to adopt a new structure. Industry expends enormous funds on the latest technology in order to remain viable and competitive in the marketplace. However, three or four years after industry has purchased that high-tech machinery, it may become obsolete. Therefore, for industry to get the most value out of that machinery, it must operate it for almost 24 hours a day; that means that TAFE must accommodate the training needs of industry for almost 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.

It is no longer possible for TAFE to provide all the equipment that industry requires to meet its training needs, so TAFE must be able to make commercial arrangements with the various industry players to use the equipment that they have purchased, where TAFE will provide the training but use their equipment. We must allow the Minister to make these commercial arrangements within TAFE.

The member for Cockburn mentioned the Advanced Manufacturing Technologies Centre in East Perth. That institution has been developed within TAFE within the last few years and epitomises all the innovations that TAFE has had to make to meet the training needs of industry.

Mrs Hallahan: What will happen to it? It will go, will it not?

Mr TUBBY: Nothing will happen to it.

The members for Ashburton, Pilbara and Nollamara, and a number of others, raised the question of apprenticeships. We all know that apprenticeships have changed over the years and have had to change. About 15 per cent of the training in industry takes place in the apprenticeship area. That has not happened overnight. The member for Cockburn gave a very good response to the member for Ashburton when he said that the employment of apprentices within industry is cyclical, and for the last three or four years there has been a downturn in the economy and industry has not been taking on as many apprentices as it did previously. That has been one of the factors in the decline in apprenticeships. The other factor has been the cost of employing apprentices.

Mr Brown: Under workplace agreements, they are now as cheap as chips.

Mr TUBBY: It is still a cost which must be met by industry; and, quite frankly, industry does not get a great deal of value out of apprentices in the first few years. The Federal Government is currently trying to change that situation. I am on a policy committee which is also looking at various ways of handling that situation. Employers do not pay anything to train people who go to university; they come out of university with a qualification and go into the work force, where they may need some on the job training, but they have the fundamental qualification. However, employers who take on apprentices are expected to fund the cost of both employing and training those people. Is that reasonable? Perhaps the State should pick that up, or the Commonwealth through Austudy, so that apprentices that were trained for the first couple of years in TAFE, on a similar basis to training in universities, were allowed to gain work experience with employers, and in their third year were taken on by employers, because that is when they are of some value to employers. There are other ways of improving the apprenticeship situation.

Mr Brown: Have you looked at the German system?

Mr TUBBY: No.

Mr Brown: It is the best system in the world, and the employers make an investment in it.

Mr TUBBY: I will take the member's word for it.

Some members said that the move to modular or competency-based training has narrowed the concept of training. I have to differ. I believe it has broadened it so that people can do modules from a range of trade areas, they can build upon those modules, which are infinitely transferable from one trade area to another and from place to place within Australia, and they can design a course of training that will fit in with the workplace into which they will go. In other words, it is flexible and there is multiskilling across the board, which is exactly what the employers require. There will still be a place for apprenticeships - there is no question about that - but, regrettably, not all trade training will be apprenticeship training, as it was many years ago.

A number of members mentioned the powers of the Minister. All that will happen under this Bill is that those powers will be transferred from the Education Act to the VET Act. The Minister will still be able to do whatever he needs to do to run the TAFE sector on behalf of taxpayers under the VET Act.

Mr Ripper: Under SESDA there was a balance of power between industry and union involvement, and you have abolished that.

Mr TUBBY: The powers that the Minister had under the Colleges Act will also be transferred to this legislation. The only legislation to which there has been a major change is, as the member for Belmont mentioned, the SESDA legislation. Under the State Employment and Skills Development Authority Act, SESDA was the body corporate. SESDA has been abolished. The Minister will now be the body corporate; therefore, he will assume all the powers that were formerly given to SESDA. That is the only difference.

The Minister must have the power to establish colleges, and he has done that in the last few years with the establishment of Kimberley College and the C.Y. O'Connor College of TAFE. He formerly did that under the Education Act but will now do that under the VET Act.

The member for Pilbara commented on what he believed to be the abolition of the autonomy of the Pundulmurra, Karratha and Hedland colleges in the Pilbara. Nothing has changed with regard to their operation and nothing will change. Colleges will remain autonomous institutions. They will still be governed by their councils. However, the three areas where they will lose some autonomy is that there will be a \$500 000 cap on capital works without the need for them to go to the Minister; the Minister will have vested in him all the buildings and property; and funding will be negotiated not with Treasury but with the Department of Training. In effect, TAFE colleges will now have the same level of local autonomy and local governance as has been characteristic in the individual colleges that were established under the Colleges Act.

The member for Nollamara mentioned the transfer of funds from the commercial account of the colleges. That power is automatically available to Treasury under section 14 of the Financial Administration and Audit Act, so the Treasurer can go to the commercial accounts of any of the colleges and take out funds that are no longer required, or an excess of funds that has been built up, and put those moneys into the consolidated fund. The Treasurer has that power already. This legislation will deny the Treasurer that power and give it to the Minister for Employment and Training so that he can use the funds for the benefit of the training sector. Therefore, the excess funds will not be lost in consolidated revenue. The alternative to giving the Minister that power is to allow the very successful colleges to build up huge assets. In other words, they will put the funds into hollow logs -

Mr Graham: It would allow the colleges to be independent. That was the basis of my speech. You are confirming my speech.

Mr TUBBY: If those funds are allowed to accumulate within the commercial accounts of colleges and not be reinvested in the colleges -

Mr Graham: If the colleges are independent and able to govern their own affairs, that is their business.

Mr TUBBY: Ultimately the Minister is responsible to the taxpayers for the funds of those organisations. The Burt commission had something to say about ministerial responsibility, and -

Mrs Hallahan: You have not taken any notice of that!

Mr TUBBY: This is an area which we thought would receive support from the Opposition: Ultimately, the Minister must be responsible. If that were not the case, the colleges would fall within the provisions of the Financial Administration and Audit Act and the funds could be taken out by the Treasurer -

Mr Graham: As independent organisations!

Mr TUBBY: - and would be lost in consolidated revenue -

Mr Graham: You have confirmed what I said. This is all about removing the independence of the north west colleges and putting them under the control of the Minister and the department. They will become autonomous, not independent. It is a retrograde step for the north west. You have just confirmed that.

Mr TUBBY: I think the member will find that there will be little change.

With regard to the commercial activities of colleges, the Minister must allow the colleges to negotiate with private companies and individuals under commercial arrangements. At the Advanced Manufacturing Technologies Centre, Stephen Beer is doing a marvellous job. It has many relationships with various industry bodies. One hindrance has been the need to go through the State Supply Commission, because it holds up the process. In some cases the process has been held up for four weeks, and the industry has found a private provider of the service, because it wanted something done quickly.

The industry could not afford the time to go through the bureaucratic process. Inevitably, because this is a training area, the State Supply Commission does not have the necessary expertise to assess the tendering process, or to know what was being tendered for. The commission needs to take advice from the Department of Training. It acted as a post box, more or less; the department would perform the functions and report to the commission, which would give approval without having any real involvement. Therefore, the Department of Training was performing the function under the guidelines of the State Supply Commission. That will be the process under this legislation. It will operate under the guidelines.

At the request of the State Supply Commission the Department of Training has obtained quality certification for procedures relating to the management, tender and purchase of educational services. Therefore, it will be easier and more flexible for the department to operate the tendering process for training services. Members must remember that this applies only to tendering and training services; it has nothing else to do with the operations of TAFE colleges or the Department of Training.

Another area of concern raised by a number of members was appointments to boards and councils. The sticking point is that the tripartite arrangement will be abolished. There will be no representation of particular groups on boards or councils, whether industry or unions or any other group in the community -

Mr Ripper: Why?

Mr TUBBY: Why should there be?

Mr Ripper: Those people are important stakeholders in the system, and they have expertise to contribute.

Mr TUBBY: If they have the necessary expertise, they will be appointed to the board. If they are appointed as representatives of a business group or union, their first priority will be to represent the interests of the group they represent -

Mr Ripper: Don't the union and industry representatives have vital interests which should be represented?

Mr TUBBY: That is an agenda which may or may not be conducive to the best operations of the college. The first duty of people appointed to a council or board must be to the council or board. They must not represent some hidden agenda of a group, whether it be the unions or the industry.

Mr Ripper: Hasn't one of the historic problems of the system been a lack of responsiveness to industry and to practical situations in the work force?

Mr TUBBY: Yes.

Mr Ripper: Therefore, why do you seek to abolish representation from the very people to whom the system has not responded?

Mr TUBBY: We will not allow interest groups to be represented by right. There will, no doubt, be members from the union movement, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, or whatever, but they will not represent the organisation as such. They will be there in their own right.

Mr Brown: Will you remove the Australian Medical Association from legislation under which it has rights on medical boards? Will you remove the Law Society or any other organisation which takes a coherent and consistent view?

Mr TUBBY: I can answer only for state training -

Mr Brown: This is biased legislation, in that respect.

Mr TUBBY: No, it is not. I refer to clauses 19(3), 25(3) and 39(3). In each case the wording is similar: The first clause mentioned relates to appointment to the training boards. The members are to be appointed by the Minister

for their experience and expertise in education and training, industry or community affairs and for their ability to contribute to the strategic direction of the state training system. As to accreditation councils, clause 25(3) states that the members are to be appointed for their expertise, qualifications and experience in accreditation, curriculum, training provider registration or skills recognition. As to college councils, clause 39(3) states that the members referred to in the previous subclause are to be appointed for their experience and expertise in education and training, industry or community affairs and for their ability to contribute to the strategic direction of the college. They are the required experience and qualifications; they must be relevant. The mere fact that a person comes from the trade union movement does not mean that the person will possess all those skills. The Minister will appoint people on the basis of their skills, experience and qualification, not on whom they represent -

Mr Thomas: You are missing the point that a number of people in the trade union movement have a particular interest in training and skills classification. They have devoted themselves and given themselves selflessly to the industry training systems, in the past. You are now saying that their contribution is worthless. They are being ignored, or that is the way it will be taken. I am sure that this legislation reflects anti-union bigotry. Their contribution has never been misused for industrial purposes. They have a commitment to the industry and groups they represent.

Mr TUBBY: I hope the member is wrong. The positions will be widely advertised so that people can express an interest in being appointed to boards or councils; it will be the same process as applies with appointments to any government board. The Minister will select from people who apply, outlining their qualifications and experience. I hope that applications will come from the union movement, from the people with the necessary skills mentioned by the member for Cockburn, those who can make a valuable contribution; but they will not be selected simply because they represent the union movement. They will be appointed because they are experts in their own field.

Mr Thomas: They will be there, because they will be run past Cabinet and Graham Kierath, but no union official will apply!

Mr TUBBY: I hope they do, if they have the relevant skills, and if they can make a contribution, I hope they become involved.

Many of the other issues that were raised are better handled in Committee. I thank all members for their contribution to the debate. I express again my disappointment that members opposite will not support this legislation which is important for the training of young people for future employment prospects within our State.

Question put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (29)

Mr Ainsworth	Dr Hames	Mr Prince
Mr C.J. Barnett	Mr Johnson	Mr Shave
Mr Blaikie	Mr Lewis	Mr W. Smith
Mr Board	Mr Marshall	Mr Strickland
Mr Bradshaw	Mr Minson	Mr Trenorden
Dr Constable	Mr Nicholls	Mr Tubby
Mr Court	Mr Omodei	Dr Turnbull
Mr Cowan	Mr Osborne	Mrs van de Klashorst
Mr Day	Mrs Parker	Mr Bloffwitch (<i>Teller</i>)
Mrs Edwardes	Mr Pandal	

Noes (19)

Ms Anwyl	Mr Graham	Mr Ripper
Mr M. Barnett	Mrs Hallahan	Mrs Roberts
Mr Brown	Mrs Henderson	Mr D.L. Smith
Mr Catania	Mr Kobelke	Mr Thomas
Mr Cunningham	Mr McGinty	Dr Watson
Dr Edwards	Mr Riebeling	Ms Warnock (<i>Teller</i>)
Dr Gallop		

Pairs

Mr House	Mr Marlborough
Mr McNee	Mr Leahy
Mr Wiese	Mr Grill
Mr Kierath	Mr Bridge

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

Committee

The Deputy Chairman of Committees (Ms Warnock) in the Chair; Mr Tubby (Parliamentary Secretary) in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1: Short title -

Mr KOBELKE: The Opposition will go through a number of clauses to point out the problems with this legislation. We have tried to make many of those points clear in the second reading debate. This Bill has major faults. In fact, the faults are so major that the Opposition does not believe amendments can remedy the shortcomings in the Bill. Nonetheless, we will try to make suggestions about how some of the provisions can be improved, although the Bill as a whole is likely to be a step backwards. Given that the Minister responsible for the Bill and the shadow Minister are in the other place, it is likely that major amendment will be left to the carriage of this Bill in the other place.

Clause put and passed.**Clause 2: Commencement -**

Mr BROWN: Is it intended that different clauses of the legislation will come into operation on different dates? If so, which provisions will come first and which will come later?

Mr TUBBY: Provision has been made for parts of the legislation to come into operation at different times. All of the Bill with the exception of part 7 will come into effect as soon as the Bill is proclaimed. It is hoped that part 7 will come into effect within 12 months of that date because the regulations must be in place before the Industrial Training Act is repealed. One of the schedules will amend the Industrial Training Act to allow the VET Bill to operate in conjunction with that Act during the intervening 12 months.

Mr BROWN: Clause 59 provides for regulations to be drawn on a variety of issues, including prescribing the amount of paid employment to be provided to a trainee. It intended that that will be at least 12 months away? In particular, will the regulations relating to the provisions in clause 59(1)(c) be 12 months away? It seems that provision gives the State the right to determine the amount that is actually paid to a trainee by way of paid employment.

Mr Tubby: Until the Industrial Training Act is repealed it will be determined by the Industrial Training Tribunal.

Mr Thomas: That will take some time.

Mr Tubby: Probably about 12 months. My understanding is that an employer can already apply under the current legislation to have a reduction in wages due to a shortage of work or temporary financial difficulties, or whatever reason. That is already a provision. Nothing is changing.

Mr BROWN: I understand employers can apply to work shorter hours, not to reduce rates. We can deal with that when we debate clause 59. I am just trying to find out what the young people in my electorate, and other electorates - I hold some shadow responsibilities in this area - might be facing and when this change may come about. Am I correct in saying that this provision is unlikely to come into operation for about 12 months, as the Parliamentary Secretary said?

Mr Tubby: That is right.

Clause put and passed.**Clause 3 put and passed.****Clause 4: Objects -**

Mr KOBELKE: Everyone would want to support the objectives set out in this clause. I do not want to take issue with the stated objectives in the Bill. My concern is whether they will mean anything. We have seen a range of shortcomings in the operation of the existing system. If these objectives were to be implemented, we would not have to face those shortcomings. I want to take up a couple of those issues. First, I refer to the objective set out in paragraph (d); that is, to promote equality of opportunity to undertake vocational education and training. I want to support that fully, but the system now in place would not be meeting that objective. Under this Government we have seen a continuing increase in the fees to be charged. Although the fees, which were in place when this Government came into power, have a very considerable let out for people who might have trouble meeting them, the changes that have taken place have continually lifted the level of those costs and the concessions that were available. It is becoming more and more difficult for people of lesser means to meet the costs of courses. The costs component is going in the opposite direction to what we have here in this objective; that is, to try to provide equity of access to the training programs.

Access is also becoming a difficulty in the way in which the colleges within the metropolitan area have been regionalised and how the courses have been transferred to particular sites. For example, about a year ago a

constituent who lived in Balga came to see me. He wanted to do an automotive course. The vacancies for that course were at either the Carlisle or Rockingham colleges.

Mr Bloffwitch: Carlisle has always been the centre of the automotive industry.

Mr KOBELKE: My point is that previously those courses could be undertaken in the northern suburbs. This concentration of courses at a limited number of sites means an additional burden is being placed on some students to travel to the colleges offering the courses. People from Balga have to go to either the college at Rockingham or the college at Carlisle to do the automotive course. The hairdressing course has been moved to Midland. I understand there is a problem with that location not only with the travel aspect, but also the hinterland and the commercial and shopping centres in Midland do not provide the concentration of hairdressing shops that might be in other suburbs. There is simply not the same concentration of industry in that area. People must travel quite a long distance to Midland to undertake that course.

Mr Bloffwitch: That has always been the way.

Mr KOBELKE: No, it has not always been the way. Hairdressing was offered at a much wider range of colleges; therefore, people could attend a college that was within a reasonable distance of where they lived or worked. With this concentration of courses at a much smaller number of sites, people must travel much greater distances to take up the courses. That major problem has denied access to the course for many people.

I wrote to the director of the North Metropolitan College of TAFE, Kath White, asking for figures on the number of people undertaking some of the courses at the various sites. I think it related to automotive courses because I had had a complaint. I received the devil of a run-around. Correspondence went backwards and forwards for about four or five months until finally she came to see me and wanted to know why I needed the figures. I wanted the figures because I had received a request from people about the ability to get into the courses and about which courses were running at various centres. There was also the implication - I did not take this up with Kath White - that there had been a drop-off in the number of people taking a range of these courses because it was just too difficult for them to get out to the colleges. In their instance, the course was distant from either their workplace or their home and the travel required meant it was too difficult for them to continue with the course. I do not have any figures to support that; but I have anecdotal evidence that that has become a major problem.

Mr TUBBY: Basically the fees have been maintained in line with the consumer price index. There have been no major increases in the fees except for hobby courses, which are on a cost recovery basis. I do not know whether the member for Nollamara disagrees with me about that.

Mr Kobelke: There are changes to the concessions and allowances.

Mr TUBBY: Disadvantaged people and people on pensions can gain reductions and exemptions by application.

Mr Kobelke: The level at which it applies has changed.

Mr TUBBY: As far as we are aware there has been no major change. The member is correct in what he said about the courses. Some rationalisation of courses between the colleges has taken place, the reason being that it is just too expensive for TAFE to replicate all of the equipment and resources at all the different TAFE colleges to offer the same courses. As I mentioned during the second reading speech, technology is changing so quickly, it is very difficult for TAFE to keep abreast of the latest equipment and resources used within industry. If we replicated all of those courses in each TAFE college, it would be impossible to fund it. We can do one of two things: First, we can have obsolete equipment in the colleges or, secondly, we can rationalise resources into a smaller number of colleges and provide the best up to date equipment at those locations. I know it causes an impost on students having to travel, but there is no other way that TAFE can get around that problem without spending an enormous amount of additional money to purchase equipment that would be underutilised in all of the TAFE colleges.

Mr KOBELKE: The Parliamentary Secretary is correct when he states that certain courses require very expensive equipment, but there is more to it than that. At Balga campus, which is in my electorate, we have a special woodwork centre, which cost about \$14m and which has equipment for woodworking, production of furniture and so on. That centre could not be duplicated because the costs would be prohibitive. No-one would expect that that type of course would be offered at a number of centres unless there was the demand, and clearly there is not at the present time. Therefore, those facilities are located at one site, and there is no problem with that. However, a whole range of courses do not require that level of capital expenditure; for example, hairdressing courses and, to some extent, automotive courses, which are in the middle range - obviously there is a cost component with the equipment but it is not at the top level. That type of course can be considered for more sites and it must be tailored to demand.

One of the key objectives of this legislation is to promote equality of opportunity for access to these courses. Either this objective means something and it will be acted upon or it is there simply for show. In the management of the system, there must be a balancing of costs with respect to the various objectives. However, if the Government is saying that it will never carry any cost component in order to provide equity, it has no commitment to equity. If

equity is a key objective, in each instance the planners will weigh up the additional cost that must be met in order to provide some equality of access. There will be times when it is decided that the cost is too much and equity will suffer. However, there must be some cases where, for the purposes of equity, the Government realises that there is an extra cost loading involved in offering the course in more locations. It is decided that equity and access are important issues - they are major principles - and it will bear the cost loading in providing that particular program at additional sites. My real worry is that this Government, while it includes this as an objective, has not demonstrated any real commitment to access and equity across the population.

Training in mortar trades was available at the Balga campus some years ago. There is not a huge cost component to mortar trades; there is a pile of bricks in the corner that are laid, knocked down, cleaned and laid again. Obviously there is some cost component in having instructors on site, and there may be a problem juggling them in relation to the student load at the time. However, those mortar trades were a real avenue for work for the long-term unemployed in Balga.

The college also offered a range of programs for students at the secondary level so that they could gain some experience at TAFE. One of the really important issues that arose for me, particularly when that program was cut, was that by participating for a couple of hours a week at Balga TAFE a number of those people knew where the college was and felt at home there. I was told that that was a real incentive for those people to take up TAFE courses - they felt it gave them a direction for their future training for employment. That course was wiped out because on a cost basis there was not sufficient demand in Balga and it was offered elsewhere. Many of the people in that area would not have access to that course at other colleges simply because of transport difficulties.

I understand that we do not have a bottomless pit of money and that decisions must be made to use the money available as efficiently as possible. However, if this objective of providing equity is to mean anything, there must be occasions when an extra cost component is covered simply to ensure that there is some equity of access.

Mr TUBBY: There is not a lot I can add. However, if the member thinks that the people in Balga have a problem he should realise that people in country areas have even larger problems as far as access to courses is concerned.

Mr Graham: The answer is to take the facilities off the people in the city. Well done!

Mr TUBBY: The people in the metropolitan area are well served when compared with those in some of the country regions.

Mr BROWN: First, clause 4(b) lists one of the objectives of this legislation as promoting equality of opportunity to undertake vocational education and training. How is that to be done? What mechanisms are included in the Bill to enable that to occur? Secondly, I draw the Parliamentary Secretary's attention to paragraph (f); which refers to allowing for the operation of an open and competitive training market in this State. Has the introduction of some competition in the training market meant that we are seeing courses developed and operated that provide for lower quality outcomes, that quality outcomes have been affected by cost and that we have a highly competitive training market where cost has been reduced but at the expense of quality training? If this is implemented, will it lead to a reduction in cost but, equally, a reduction in the quality of training and therefore the quality of skills that are provided?

In addition, why is there no mention of an objective to provide high quality training in Western Australia? Paragraph (a) refers to establishing a state training system for the effective and efficient provision of vocational education and training to meet the immediate and future needs of industry and the community. The operative words are "effective" and "efficient". We are talking about quality training and the need for an objective to provide high quality training to ensure that the State has the skills base that it needs for the future. High quality training and the development of a high skills base cannot be assumed given the words used in this paragraph. Why are we not emphasising the need for high quality training with high skills based outcomes that are flexible? I would be pleased if the Parliamentary Secretary could respond in some detail to each of the questions I have asked.

Mr Tubby: I missed the middle question.

Mr BROWN: Subclause (f) relates to allowing for the operation of an open and competitive market in the State. We have seen what can happen in the training market when a multiplicity of suppliers make decisions on the basis of cost rather than quality. As a result of this Bill, are we likely to see a training market in which quality standards are sacrificed in the name of lower costs or effective competition? One need look only at the various courses that are provided cheaply but provide low quality outcomes.

Mr TUBBY: As to the first part of the question, in the development of quality standards a great deal of consultation took place with all the different interest groups in the disabilities area. Special care was taken to ensure that there would be equality of opportunity to enable those people to participate in training. With regard to it being open and competitive, the provision of training will contain a range of quality. There is no question about that. The Training Accreditation Council is responsible for accrediting the courses and registering training institutions. It will also monitor the standards and the certification of courses. Once a course is certified it will be recognised around

Australia because of Australian National Training Authority agreements that have been made over the last few years between the various States. With regard to the certification and the International Standards Organisation's standards that are being achieved, I was at the South Metropolitan College of TAFE a couple of months ago when it was presented with certification for meeting one of the ISO quality standards. That is another way in which standards will be maintained through the certification process.

Mr D.L. SMITH: I guess this applies as much to the title of the Bill, but the description in general terms is vocational education and training. That certainly seems to be saying that any role in adult education per se is no longer appropriate for the colleges which are established under this legislation. It seems to suggest that any role in adult education and skills for life training in which regional colleges have previously been involved is now to be much less. In paragraph (f) the operation of an open and competitive training market is referred to but not an open and competitive vocational education and training market. What significance should we attach to the fact that the open and competitive market applies only to training and not to vocational education? What does "open" mean in that context? I can understand what is a competitive market, but what is an open and competitive market? Does it mean that a tendering process will be required for all the training courses which will be provided by state money or commonwealth money allocated by the State?

I will have more to say about this in relation to clients. The emphasis in the whole of the Bill and in the structure of the new institutions does not really identify the client. As far as I can establish, there is no definition of "client". The primary purpose of education is to educate an individual with certain skills and provide knowledge. In some cases it may be that the person may not even use those skills in Western Australia. They may be skills which are capable of being exported. Why are the objects couched in terms of the needs of industry and the community and not in terms of the needs of the individuals who require education? In our society education itself for the individual should be an objective. If young people growing up in Western Australia are looking for a career, whether in Western Australia or elsewhere, the kind of training that is required for that should be available locally. The focus must not simply be on state and community needs. There must be some focus on the individual. In education the primary focus must be on the individual. I can understand arguments about running courses which will not lead anywhere for the advancement of that person in life and the need to meet the employment profile to ensure we have enough qualified people in Western Australia to take on the jobs that are here. Why is so little emphasis throughout this Bill placed on the individual wanting to educate himself in the sorts of skills that colleges have traditionally provided? Why is the emphasis always on industry and the community and not on the idea that people should be able to seek education for their own benefit as much as anybody else's?

Mr TUBBY: With regard to the provision of community education through TAFE colleges, if the member reads clause 37, which refers to functions of a college, he will see the objective set out under paragraph (g).

Mr D.L. Smith interjected.

Mr TUBBY: A reference is made in the legislation to a competitive training market with purchases by the State of vocational education and training from either public or private education providers. The training market includes both aspects.

Mr D.L. Smith: Why is there so little emphasis on the individual?

Mr TUBBY: The member refers to education for the benefit of the individual rather than for the good of society, but that philosophical argument has raged for all time. Are university courses run for a person's gratification and education, or are they run for the benefit of society so the individual can make a contribution to society economically, culturally and socially when he or she graduates? That matter and balance has been discussed since the first university. The member applies the same argument in relation to TAFE colleges.

Mr D.L. SMITH: My second point relates to the provision of education, skills and vocational opportunities outside the State for the people of the State. The Bill emphasises only the needs of the State. If a young person has an interest in aeronautical engineering, for instance, TAFE-type education makes no recognition of that interest, because that person's future employment lies in Sydney and Melbourne.

Mr TUBBY: The member is right - it is a question of how much training we can provide with the training dollars available from state and federal purses. We must focus on the training needs for our State. I cannot see a great deal of value in running an aeronautical TAFE course when no employment opportunity exists for people in our State in that regard and graduates must go to Sydney for employment.

Mr D.L. Smith: It limits the degree of choices for young Western Australians.

Mr TUBBY: The mind boggles at the opportunities available to young Western Australians today when compared with the choices available when the member for Mitchell left school. In our time one could be a lawyer, teacher, doctor, and so on - but that was about it.

Mr D.L. Smith: When we came out of school, it was as easy as pie.

Mr TUBBY: Many more choices are available these days than were available when we left school.

Mr KOBELKE: Paragraph (f) of the objectives states -

to allow for the operation of an open and competitive training market in this State.

I know it is clearly the objective of the legislation that we should have a competitive training market, but given the ascendancy which the bureaucracy will have over the colleges, it will be interesting to see how much competition will occur between the colleges.

Mr Tubby: Can you explain that "ascendancy of the bureaucracy"?

Mr KOBELKE: The Parliamentary Secretary seemed to take a different point of view in debate last night. The colleges will have no autonomy; they will be controlled by the central bureaucracy and the Minister. Therefore, the ability to open up competition between the various colleges may not be achieved in any way by the legislation.

Although competition is very useful, it is not a god; the end result is desirable, not competition itself. Competition can be a valuable tool to ensure innovation in the range of product on offer. However, the current system has a clear danger in believing that competition is the god in itself.

Will the Parliamentary Secretary comment on the six objectives? It is strange that no reference is made in any of these objectives to quality training and education or to standards in training. They are referred to obliquely when referring to the effective and efficient provision of programs, and to qualification and skills; however, the objects of the Bill contain no stated intent that we should produce quality training which meets the highest standards. That seems not to be a simple oversight. It is caught up with the idea of an open and competitive training market.

The Parliamentary Secretary, in his response to the member for Mitchell, said that these objectives were designed to meet the needs of industry. If that is the sole purpose in the narrowest sense, the structure is being built on very shaky foundations. Clearly, the needs of industry for training are of considerable importance, but if they are not seen in the context of community need, we will not provide quality training and vocational programs. We may meet a specific need for industry at a specific time, but the long term objective will not be met of providing people with the skills and breadth of training necessary for their industry and our community infrastructure as they change. In that way, people can more easily adapt and take on the new roles required of them.

If the Parliamentary Secretary said that the main objective is to meet the needs of industry in a narrow way, we will clearly fail in trying to meet the vocational education and training needs of this State. One must take a broad perspective; if not, one has no understanding of the quality required in training.

All too often we see competition as simply meeting the lowest possible price in tendering for a training program. If the necessary structures are not in place to check on the quality of that training to ensure it is delivering long term value, money will be wasted. It does not matter whether a course is obtained for a lower price, because money will be wasted if it does not deliver the level of training needed. A long term view must be taken about the efficiency of these programs so we have quality training as well as value for money.

Mr TUBBY: First, the member referred to the department and the independence of the colleges. The colleges will be independent, and they will compete. The department is the purchaser of the courses, and the colleges will be competing against very good quality private providers. If TAFE colleges cannot meet the quality and standards of the private sector, frankly, they will not win the tender. Competition will apply.

Mr Kobelke: I understand that that is the theory, but we will see how it works in practice.

Mr TUBBY: It is the theory and the practice. It is the requirement of the Commonwealth Government, and its predecessor, that that be done. Through the Australian National Training Authority agreement we must obtain the best possible training we can, regardless of whether it is TAFE or private training, on a competitive basis. This has had the effect of bringing TAFE into the modern era in training. I remember when Gavan Troy was the Minister responsible for TAFE, he met a brick wall as he tried to make changes in the TAFE sector. In 1988-89, when I first came into this place, he was fighting battles which have continued over the last seven or eight years. We will continue that fight. TAFE must change. If it is to stay in the training arena, it must be relevant. This process started with the previous Government, which faced the same problems we now confront. The process started in the federal sphere when Labor was in government, and we are continuing that process. It did not suddenly come into effect when either this Government or the new Federal Government came into office. It is a fact of life that industry requires more flexible training programs which are transferable and up to date. If TAFE cannot provide these programs, they will be provided by somebody else. TAFE has undergone a huge cultural change and it has not been easy for many of the TAFE lecturers.

Mr D.L. Smith: That is a gross understatement.

Mr TUBBY: The member is right. I referred earlier to the supervision of the quality of the programs and said that I was at the South Metropolitan College of TAFE when the staff were very proud to receive their International Standards Organisation quality certification. It is encouraging standards to rise. Western Australia is the first State to implement that procedure and the South Metropolitan College is the first to make it available. Other colleges and private providers are being encouraged to pursue quality certification.

Mr Kobelke: I accept that a lot of good work is being done to provide quality training. Many of the State's programs are of a very high quality. However, in a competitive training market some providers may not provide quality. If the program is not properly monitored the providers will offer the lowest price and there will be repercussions from the service providers. If they cannot match the price, they will not get the work and it will put pressure on them and they will cut corners by reducing the price and the quality will suffer.

Mr TUBBY: That is the reason that the Training Accreditation Council is being established under this legislation. It will have the ability to register the private providers and their courses and supervise them to ensure that the level of competency obtained by the students is there. At the end of the day, it will also be responsible for the certificates which are issued. The Government does not want the certificates which are issued at the colleges not to be accepted by industry either within this State or other States. It must be a recognised qualification which meets a certain standard. The member for Mitchell referred last night to a degree from one institution not being as highly recognised as the same degree from another institution. Across Australia a bachelor of arts is recognised, regardless of from which university it is obtained. Of course, people have prejudices about various institutions, but that is personal. A certification is a standard.

Mr D.L. SMITH: My principal interest is in the area of the quality of opportunity to undertake vocational education and training. I am surprised that in terms of the objectives of the Bill there is no reference to the colleges. Surely one of the objectives must be that the State will establish, support and properly resource colleges in each region of this State. That is not what is outlined in the Bill. It provides only a quality of opportunity to undertake vocational education and training. It does not imply any change from the current position where, for a great range of courses, people in country areas must come to Perth to do the course full time or, in the case of apprentices, must come to Perth to undertake block courses for short periods while on leave from their employment. Why is there an emphasis on a state training profile rather than a regional training profile?

I am concerned that when dealing with state training profiles one is identifying in broad terms what courses should be provided in Western Australia. It does not identify what courses should be provided in each region. It worries me enormously that the courses available in Bunbury are largely historic. They have not responded to the actual regional employment profile which could be generated if someone were to do the necessary research. For example, a course in the maintenance and servicing of heavy equipment - excavators, tractavators and heavy haulage trucks - is not available in the south west. In the past, under the efficiency and effectiveness provisions of these objectives, various colleges in Western Australia, mainly in metropolitan Perth, have been identified as specialist providers in certain areas. In other words, one metropolitan college will have a reputation in one area and other metropolitan colleges will have reputations in other areas. Of course, that is of no concern to people in the metropolitan area because it simply means that the students will have to catch two buses instead of one.

However, the only way country students can access those courses is to live in Perth, with the extra expense that incurs, or get relief from their employers to undertake block courses. I can understand that in relation to those courses for which a regional profile does not identify a need. I am constantly told by people who operate heavy machinery in the mining industry in the south west that they cannot obtain the services of qualified people. If they take on people who are unqualified they cannot get any training for them in Bunbury. In an area where there is one-fifth of the State's mining industry it amazes me that the relevant courses are not available. In the past the argument has been that it is not possible to provide the base heavy equipment for people to train on in every centre around the State. The base training equipment which is provided in the metropolitan colleges is inadequate and it should not be very hard to devise a system so that where people are being trained on particular equipment they can, with the cooperation of employers and industry do their training in the field. If regional training profiles are established rather than state training profiles, it will be through the regional training profiles that one can identify exactly what courses should be provided in each region. Members should not forget that people in the south west should not be deprived of a future career in Perth or the north west simply because their parents live in Bunbury. Both the individual and regional needs must be catered for.

Mr TUBBY: In the past the provision of courses at the South West College has been dictated by TAFE. The advisory council has not had a great input. Under this legislation the governing council will be responsible for creating the training needs of a region.

Mr D.L. Smith: Who develops the regional training profile for them?

Mr TUBBY: The governing council will do that.

Mr D.L. Smith: On a region by region basis?

Mr TUBBY: Yes, and all the colleges will provide their profiles. That is the reason the Minister has been given the power to request a training profile. The reason is that the amalgam of the profiles will go towards forming the state profile which will be presented to ANTA for federal government funding. The governing council will dictate to the college manager what courses will be required. Under this legislation a commercial arrangement can be made. This already happens with the Karratha and Hedland Colleges - they use the mining companies' machinery and provide the expertise to train trainees. The companies do not want to employ the trainers; they want to contract the trainers to use their equipment to train their employees. I cannot see any reason why the same process cannot take place in the south west through the college.

The Government will be calling nominations for membership of the college councils. Knowing the member for Mitchell's interest in the south west, his expertise in this area and his views, I hope he will submit an application.

Mr D.L. SMITH: I advise the parliamentary secretary that I was on the board of the South West College long before I became a member of Parliament.

Progress

Progress reported.

Sitting suspended from 1.01 to 2.00 pm

[Questions without notice taken.]

CURTIN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 25 June.

MR KOBELKE (Nollamara) [2.33 pm]: The Opposition will support this legislation, the effect of which is to amalgamate the Western Australian School of Mines and Kalgoorlie College. Most members would realise that the Western Australian School of Mines is a branch of Curtin University of Technology. It is an institution with a proud history and with established standards in the courses it runs. It has strengths in the areas of mining, metallurgy and geology. Kalgoorlie College is an independent college under the Colleges Act, although given the other legislation currently before the Parliament, that will not be the case for much longer. It primarily runs technical and further education courses, but also is able to offer courses at the first year undergraduate level for other universities in Western Australia.

It is hoped that the amalgamation of the two institutions will provide a branch of Curtin University of Technology that will be better suited to meet the tertiary education needs in the Kalgoorlie region. In order to ensure that it is able to tailor its courses to meet the needs in Kalgoorlie and for the mining industry, a devolution of responsibilities will occur from the Curtin University of Technology council to a local community council. I will say something about that later.

In 1991 a report was conducted into tertiary education in Kalgoorlie. That report suggested that considerable benefit would be achieved if a greater degree of cooperation existed between the Western Australian School of Mines and Kalgoorlie College. It is reported that that level of cooperation was to some extent vulnerable to changes in staff at the institutions. Although a good level of cooperation might exist at a particular time, with a change of staff in various positions it could not be assured that that would continue. It is hoped that this restructuring through the amalgamation of the two will put on a firmer basis that level of cooperation. Not only will cooperation between the two institutions be achieved, but the institutions will become one, carrying both streams; that is, the university courses from Curtin and a range of TAFE courses. There will be a greater ability to ensure coordination between the courses and students may be able to choose a mix of courses from those two main streams.

The Minister's second reading speech gives some idea of what could be achieved in the quality and viability of tertiary education programs in Kalgoorlie by this amalgamation. However, I would like to see a greater emphasis on that vision. If the Government does not have a clear vision of what it is setting out to achieve in education, it is likely to become too involved in the mechanics of funding or other matters. Although this amalgamation will provide some clear advantages in funding, I hope that the vision for education in the goldfields will receive far more prominence than the pragmatic matters that must be considered in funding. Perhaps when the Minister responds he will elaborate a little on his vision for the new amalgamated campus at Kalgoorlie.

Through this amalgamation an additional \$6m in capital expenditure from the Commonwealth has become available in the current year. The Minister can correct me if I am wrong: The projected further capital funding is \$3m in 1998 and \$3m in 1999. In addition, an increase in operating budgets has occurred to allow for an increased enrolment. That enrolment has already been increased by 40 in the current year in the light of the decision to amalgamate. I understand that an additional 30 places will become available in 1997 and 10 places in 1998. That is something for

which the Opposition congratulates the Government. I hope to see the numbers at that campus increase. It is important that a major tertiary learning institution such as this operates successfully outside the metropolitan area.

It is hoped that the amalgamation will enable the university to be more successful in gathering private sector funding for the range of programs it will offer. I understand there has been some success to date. It is hoped that that success can be built on so the industries it serves in the goldfields will recognise the value of investing money in the Kalgoorlie campus of Curtin University of Technology to ensure that it is even better able to meet the local needs of industry. Given this marrying of the university and the Kalgoorlie College, the customised training will continue. That is an area that can be expanded to meet the needs of industry. I do not have recent information on research and development activities, but I understand they are at a fairly low level. One hopes that we will see a major development in this area. The member for Cockburn has a keen interest in scientific research and development in this State. I am sure he will make some comments. The positive spin-off for education, as I see it, is that if we can establish a major research component at Kalgoorlie relating to the mining industry, it will attract academics of world distinction to lecture there, either on a full time basis or through a sessional arrangement. If we are to attract the world's leading academics, we must have a research component rather than the odd visiting lecturer. I hope we will see a growth in research at Kalgoorlie to meet the needs of the mining industry and add to the stature of this institution, and ensure top class academics are available for the students.

The Minister was distracted a while ago when I indicated that although I accept the Minister's vision as set out in his second reading speech, I hope that he might elaborate on it. It is fundamental that he have a clear vision of what should be done educationally. If he becomes caught up in the pragmatic funding of the institutions, the educational component could suffer. Clearly, funding advantages are involved in the amalgamated campus.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Are you talking specifically about the School of Mines component, which I am sure your colleague the member for Kalgoorlie will talk about?

Mr KOBELKE: I accept that the Minister has addressed this in his speech, but in a fairly limited way. I ask him to expand on that explanation. I will move on to touch on some of the funding and organisational aspects that are enhanced by this amalgamation. We can see in the funding I have indicated that by combining the two we maximise the opportunities to avail ourselves of commonwealth funding, whether that be funding through higher education or through ANTA for a technical form of education. There is also clearly a saving in administrative costs through amalgamating the two institutions. Although that is not a big thing in itself, in these days when we are looking for every dollar we can find in education because of the cutbacks from the Commonwealth, we must take advantage of the efficiencies created by amalgamating administrations. The point I made to the Minister of hoping that he was driven by vision and not simply cost saving is taken as accepted. These moves were started well prior to the Commonwealth's announcement of major cuts in tertiary education. I am not suggesting the motivation was as a result of the current commonwealth cuts to tertiary student funding. One hopes that the whole of the initiative will be focused on what we are trying to achieve in education and not the mechanics of trying to do it as efficiently as possible. The Opposition certainly wishes to support this amalgamation. We can see real value flowing from it. A few hiccups are likely, and we can address those as the debate unfolds. As an aside, university amalgamation generally is being publicly discussed. I understand from the statements in the media - I have not spoken to the Minister about this - that he has not been personally involved in initiating the current amalgamation discussions with our other four universities.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I have certainly been involved in discussions and I support it. Who initiated this is a moot point. I have certainly been part of the discussions with some of the vice-chancellors. I have not specifically initiated any amalgamation.

Mr KOBELKE: I accept that the Minister has a role in the discussions. I would be concerned if he were driving it, as did John Dawkins some years ago. That could open up a whole range of problems which could have a very negative effect on the quality of education in Western Australia. If I may address why the current process is a positive one, I am not prejudging the outcome or pushing any barrow for one university as opposed to another to cooperate or amalgamate with any of the other universities. If the universities themselves can see advantages to their programs and delivery of tertiary courses to Western Australia generally, they should be carrying through discussions to look into all the possibilities of entering into arrangements to improve the current offer. Although there may be some cost savings, I hope the process will not be driven by the current cost squeeze due to government cuts but by what is best for the longer term status and quality of tertiary education in this State. Having said that, one clearly must have an eye for the funding side of education. The potential for cooperation between or amalgamation of any two of our four universities would clearly be advantageous for administration. More importantly, a number of courses are being run in each of the four universities of Curtin University, which we are discussing in this Bill, the University of Western Australia, Edith Cowan University and Murdoch University, not putting them in any order, which would dovetail neatly with courses in another institution. Maybe they do not need to amalgamate; cooperative arrangements could be put in place so that students could take courses which drew a unit from one institution and perhaps others from a different institution. It would certainly mean that the subjects on offer could be broadened and students could have a greater choice as to what would suit their interests when thinking of starting degree

courses. It also means the universities themselves can be more efficient by not having to run part of a course for a small number of students when it could be run jointly with another university.

We have also seen in recent years how education has become a very important export industry. The figures I see bandied around indicate that perhaps in the order of \$2b to \$3b a year comes into Australia through the export of our education programs. That involves not only the fees that students pay, but also, it has a multiplier effect because many students come and live here and their parents or families may visit them. When we include the total economic gain to Australia through the selling of education courses, it is reported that they have a value of \$2b to \$3b a year, which is about the same value as wheat exports. It is certainly a very important industry. It is very competitive internationally. We must be able to offer courses which will draw students from other countries or alternatively, if we are taking staff from institutions to run outposts in countries in South East Asia, the students who are looking at buying those courses clearly will look at what other countries are offering. -

Mr C.J. Barnett: It will be more severe in the future. Australian universities will feel the pressure of retaining students and the competition for students with Internet and other services when the so-called world university develops.

Mr KOBELKE: I was not going on to address the opportunities that technology might offer. The point I was leading to about education is that we have to offer a broad base. If we are marketing a course to Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand or Indonesia, students may want to take a course in the mining area but they might want a specialty that is not offered here. If we have a breadth of programs relating to a particular degree, it makes the whole course more attractive when we are trying to sell it internationally.

A clear advantage will be gained in our tertiary institutions either working closely together or, the ultimate step, amalgamating. In marketing their courses to students coming to Perth, or using technology so students may take the course off-campus, students will have access to the specific subjects in which they are interested.

It is important that our institutions build themselves up to what might be regarded as a critical size. Campus life can be a problem if campuses becomes too big. However, when running and marketing courses, one must look at institutions larger than some of those in Perth. Murdoch University is a small institution which will be at a disadvantage when it comes to marketing its courses. This aspect must be considered seriously when marketing our courses to students in other countries.

Competition currently takes place between our universities, and a degree of competition is good and should be supported. However, we must be careful in education that competitiveness does not lead to one institution trying to jump over others. A couple of examples of that have arisen in Western Australia already. Edith Cowan has a major campus at Joondalup and Curtin University of Technology is also providing courses at Joondalup. I am not saying that Curtin does not have a good reason for providing those courses, but from the outside it looks like unnecessary duplication. That is not the sort of duplication we should have.

Mr Thomas: Edith Cowan is setting one up in Bentley.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I agree with your comments in part. This situation reflects the Commonwealth's taking all the funding for the university sector and the State's role of coordination, development and direction being lost; as a consequence of that, duplication occurs. I agree with you.

Mr KOBELKE: Competition must be limited and guidance must be provided to ensure we do not have unnecessary duplication; that is, one institution attempting to duplicate another with the types of offers it makes. Duplication should not occur where demand does not exist or because the institution attempts to establish a branch in a geographic location to attract more students. We must look at the quality of education presented in totality. From that point, we should step back to consider the best and most efficient method of course delivery.

I return to the specific case in the legislation; namely, the amalgamation of the Kalgoorlie College and the Western Australian School of Mines under Curtin University of Technology. What will this mean to the people of Kalgoorlie and the goldfields region? If it means an enhanced range of courses and an increased student population in Kalgoorlie, this Bill will be a success. It is my expectation and sincere hope that such a result will occur through this Bill.

Of course, one cannot be certain of the outcome when one makes such changes. There is a danger that one will find more students attracted to Perth, the only metropolitan centre in Western Australia. In excess of 70 per cent of the population of Western Australia resides in Perth, and a range of planning problems relating to the quality of life cannot be addressed if we continue to concentrate our population in Perth. One of the problems in getting people to live in other centres is that one cannot provide to the regions the same level of facilities and government services as those provided in Perth. That debate ensues on many levels regarding many services. It is a matter in which many members, particularly country members, have an interest.

The major metropolitan centres out of Perth are primarily Kalgoorlie and Bunbury, and I am sure that Kalgoorlie sees itself as the most important non-metropolitan centre. The tertiary institutions in Kalgoorlie are well established and reputable. There is something to build on. Through this legislation, it is envisaged that the growth of that institution will continue in its academic standards and student enrolments. If that does not occur, we will commit the planning of this State to a centralised metropolitan Perth at a huge cost in a whole range of areas.

Perth is reaching a critical size. If we continue to attract people into metropolitan Perth, costs will be added to service delivery. Although the large number of people in Perth provides a cost advantage to start with, a too-large population will add costs through an increasing crime rate and resulting pollution.

The enhancement of this college in Kalgoorlie should not be regarded as a cost saving matter. I hope the Government will take the decentralisation issue into account when making hard decisions about directing dollars. If the only basis for such a decision is the cost of the course per student in metropolitan Perth compared with that in Kalgoorlie, the college will not fulfil its potential. That will be a disservice to the State.

Mr Trenorden: It is interesting that you have not mentioned Muresk Institute of Agriculture once in your dissertation.

Mr KOBELKE: I will come to that when discussing the Bill in detail. The Bill does not cover Muresk. A little negative, a technical matter, at the end of the Bill relates to that institution. This Bill is primarily about the amalgamation of the Kalgoorlie College and the Western Australian School of Mines.

Mr Trenorden: The arguments you raise are valid for Muresk and the Kalgoorlie School of Mines. It is not only this place which has a problem. It is very difficult to prise money from Curtin for Kalgoorlie or Northam.

Mr KOBELKE: I thank the member for his comment, which relates to his electorate. There is a slight difference between the institutions. If one addresses the difficulties of establishing tertiary institutions outside Perth, one must concentrate on a small number of centres to make them work.

Mr Trenorden: Other places in the world do not do that.

Mr KOBELKE: I am not saying that Northam does not fit that category as it is a major town out of Perth. If one puts the argument logically, one cannot use the scattergun approach; that is, one cannot put a part of an institution here and another part there to meet needs. That approach is not sustainable. One must prove the viability and value of tertiary institutions outside Perth. To win the argument, one must pick one or two major centres - Kalgoorlie and Bunbury, for instance - and ensure that they establish first grade tertiary institutions. Once they have a track record and are up and running, it is easier then to move institutions to smaller towns.

Mr Trenorden: You're absolutely wrong.

Mr KOBELKE: The member has a vested interest in his electorate. I am happy if the member wants to make a contribution to the debate later and present arguments contrary to mine.

This college in Kalgoorlie must receive special attention to ensure that it achieves the status we hope it will achieve as a major tertiary institution. Another important element in ensuring we have a combined tertiary institution as envisaged at Kalgoorlie is the importance of the mining industry to the State's economy. With the gold and nickel industry operating in the goldfields, it makes sense to locate this institution in that region. Another important point is that the lifestyle of the region is very different from that of Perth. If people who complete their courses at this institution work in the mining industry, they will want to live in the same climate and cope with the advantages and disadvantages of living in that region. There are many cases of people taking up courses from their homes in Perth to move into the mining industry and when they have taken up employment in remote parts of the State have had difficulties seeing the advantages in that lifestyle and have tended to see the disadvantages. If people attending the tertiary institution in Kalgoorlie, people in the mining industry and the people who understand and make the mining industry so great live in the same area, there will be a symbiotic relationship between them so that the institution will be placed on the firmest possible ground for success.

I return to the point I raised earlier about whether this amalgamation will increase the number of students in Kalgoorlie or reduce them. My understanding is that, for the really key courses in engineering and mining which take four years, students will be required to undertake the last two years in Kalgoorlie.

Mr C.J. Barnett: That is the proposal.

Mr KOBELKE: I hope it is more than a proposal and it is put into effect, because if students can take the courses in Perth or Kalgoorlie and there are only a limited number of places, students from Perth who get a higher TEE score may get a larger percentage of these places and there will be a drift of student numbers from Kalgoorlie into metropolitan Perth. I know that is not the intention. I raise that fear because I want to ensure that the management of the Kalgoorlie campus is such that that does not happen. I want to also ensure that students who undertake courses in mining and mining related engineering and metallurgy will move to Kalgoorlie for most of their course work and live in that milieu of a mining town, which is such an important part of Western Australia.

The last point I make is that the Kalgoorlie Campus Council, which is established under this legislation, has a very important role to play. I cannot see any difficulties with the structure proposed in the legislation. Perhaps members may be able to point out to me some of the areas in which we could do it better. However, on my reading this seems to be an ample arrangement to ensure that Kalgoorlie has a big input into how that campus functions, given that it will become part of the larger Curtin University of Technology. It is important for the council to ensure there is no drift to Perth and that it be willing to make the decisions that have to be made centrally when it sees decisions undermining or whittling away the effectiveness of the Kalgoorlie campus. I assume it is the Minister's intention to ensure that the local council stands up for the Kalgoorlie campus to ensure it meets local needs so that it can draw on local knowledge, and also, if the council feels that the Kalgoorlie campus is not being treated properly by the central council, that it will fight the good fight on behalf of the Kalgoorlie campus.

I allude briefly to the membership of the Kalgoorlie Campus Council. The chairperson of the Kalgoorlie Campus Council will be appointed by the Minister, and the council will include seven other persons appointed by the Minister who are representative of education, the professions, or industrial, commercial or community interests. The chief executive officer of the Kalgoorlie campus will be a member of the council. The person appointed to be responsible for the management of higher education on the Kalgoorlie campus will be a member, as will be the person responsible for the management of technical and further education at the Kalgoorlie campus. Therefore, the heads of both streams - higher education and the technical side - will be members of the Kalgoorlie Campus Council. The council will also include a member of the full time higher education academic staff and a member of the full time technical and further education academic staff, who will be elected. It will include a member of the full time general staff - that is, other than academic - of the campus, an enrolled student of the Kalgoorlie campus who will be elected by enrolled students, the chief executive officer of the university or a person nominated by that chief executive, and not more than three persons appointed from time to time by cooption by the Kalgoorlie Campus Council. However, a person whose sole or principal employment is that of a member of the staff of the university will not be so appointed. If we find in the first appointments mentioned that there is not enough local membership, there is provision for three coopted positions to bring additional local representation or someone who has expertise in an important local industry onto the council. The Minister is also required under proposed section 21M(2) to try to ensure that a resident of the Esperance region is a member of the Kalgoorlie Campus Council.

I have given the main reasons for the Opposition's support for amalgamation and I have touched on a couple of areas about which I have concerns. I will now comment briefly on tertiary education generally, which impacts on the new amalgamated campus. The Opposition has been totally opposed to the changes to tertiary education made by the current Howard coalition Government. We have been a bit miffed that the Minister and the Court Government have not been willing to take the fight up to Canberra on those cuts. They have indicated that they are not happy with the cuts, but have not been willing to come out in a forceful public way and take on the Commonwealth Government. Perhaps that is partly because they are political colleagues, but more likely it is because they have similar economic minds and place considerable importance on budget restraint and, therefore, the need to reduce the outlays.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I can understand why you say that. In fairness it must be said that the universities, the Education Department services and I have played a very important and effective role in ensuring in the early stage, going back to pre-Budget when I visited Senator Vanstone in Canberra, that funding for the campus at Rockingham and Kalgoorlie occurred and that the growth places for universities in Western Australia were on it. I think we were effective in that. But we are not pleased to see some of the cuts.

Mr KOBELKE: I thank the Minister for that response. The fact is that he accepted in the early stages that the Commonwealth would cut funding in tertiary education and that would have an effect, and he argued about how it might be minimised rather than making a strong argument that it was against the national interest and the interests of Western Australia to have any cuts or increased charges in tertiary education. That is my view and that is what I believe he should have done. I hope the Minister will respond to that suggestion in his own defence.

Tertiary education is fundamental to our State's economic welfare. I have already touched briefly on the importance of education as an export industry. I will not repeat that other than to say that it brings a very large income into this State. Therefore, the Government must be careful when making cuts to the tertiary sector that it does not destroy some of the revenue coming to Western Australia and the state coffers as a result of the cuts by the Commonwealth Government. What is more important, and relates directly to the Bill, is that this State has very efficient industries. Its mining and resource industries are world leaders and if that is to continue, they must be at the forefront of technological change. They must be able to utilise the latest research techniques and the most up to date processes. That will not be the case if this State does not train people for that purpose. In some areas other countries have processes and technology from which this State can benefit, and which it can purchase in due course. However, that cannot be done in every area. This State cannot stay at the forefront and be an industry leader if it does not have a large research and education program to ensure it trains people. The Minister understands how vital that is, but he does not appear to have linked it to the importance of expanding the tertiary sector. The Government must ensure it provides training programs for those who need them now and for those who will need them in the future. An

important equity issue is involved. What is the point of having a marvellous resource sector if the benefits do not flow to the people of Western Australia? We know the resource sector is very capital intensive.

Mr C.J. Barnett: It sounds as though you are arguing for a gold royalty.

Mr KOBELKE: No, I am not. The benefit does not come from increased taxation, but from ensuring that Western Australians obtain employment in the resource industry, having been appropriately trained to do so. Other factors are involved. The Government must make sure that local industry is financially positioned to win contracts in the resource industry. However, that is not a debate for today. It is necessary to ensure that men and women, including young people, are adequately trained so that they can take leading roles in the resource industry. That cannot be done without the world best standards in tertiary education. That opportunity should be provided to as many students as possible and not just to the cream. We have passed the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, when universities were in place to educate the future leaders in our community. It is a totally different world in education. The Government must ensure the whole population has the highest possible level of education. That includes people in the hospitality industry, which rides on the back of the resource sector. A receptionist or cleaner in this day and age is likely to be required to use computers and other forms of technology. Through all levels of employment people need higher skills and training. On that basis I argue that tertiary education is no longer a ticket for the privileged to move into top management jobs. It is crucial for our industries to operate at a high level and to be world leaders in as many areas as possible. If funds are cut from tertiary education in the longer term, it will undermine the strength of this State's economy.

It is crucial to make a success of this amalgamation and to ensure that the level of courses and the academic esteem in which this institution is held are raised even higher, so that it will be a vital component in increasing the level of education and training for the work force in this important industry. I hope the college will achieve that.

I now raise a number of small points to which I hope the Minister will respond in the second reading debate. One relates to the Goldfields Art Centre, which will be handed to Curtin University. I understand that, although it is an excellent centre, it does not break even but needs top-up funding from the controlling institution. I am also advised that a verbal undertaking has been given that funding will be made available to Curtin University to help with the operating and maintenance costs of that centre. I do not know the source of that funding. I ask the Minister to provide some detail and to give an assurance that the centre will not become a burden on Curtin University, to the extent that the university will start to whittle away at the funds to the arts centre, and it will not be able to function as it should because it is relying on top-up funding, the decisions about which are made in Perth.

I now refer to the general question of housing in Kalgoorlie. The institution needs to grow and in order to do so more accommodation must be available in that town. Currently it is an expanding and vibrant centre, but housing is a major issue because of the costs involved. More specifically in relation to this Bill, the Government must provide housing for staff if they are to locate in Kalgoorlie. I understand the issue has already been addressed and I ask the Minister how effective the measure has been in ensuring adequate stock of sufficient quality is available so that the housing issue is not a disincentive for staff considering a move to the Kalgoorlie campus. That opens up the bigger issue of whether adequate student housing is provided and what measures will be taken in future to cope with the increased number of students at the Kalgoorlie campus.

In the second reading speech the Minister referred to the Esperance Tertiary Education Centre as a possible community college. I ask for more details of that because, bearing in mind the Vocational Education and Training Bill recently debated, I am not sure how it fits in and what the Minister hopes for in that area.

I place on record a number of matters contained in the clauses under the heading "Part 3 - Other Amendments". These were covered by the Minister in his second reading speech in a general way, but the Opposition would like some further information. Members on this side hope to assist the progress of the Bill by not going into Committee. If the Minister will respond to the matters I raise, it will be possible to dispense with the Committee stage. I understand clause 31 relates to giving Curtin University - not just the Kalgoorlie campus - the ability to sell property it has purchased. I am not sure of the legal obstacle, but apparently there are difficulties in the current Statutes. Clause 32 will enable the chairperson of the academic board of the university to be a member of the university council. I understand that currently the chairperson of the academic board is an elected position. I am not sure what the final number of members of the council will be and I ask the Minister to clarify that.

Clause 33 will increase the fines from \$50 to \$500. I understand the penalties in the current Act were put in place 30 years ago and, therefore, it clearly makes sense to update them. The maximum penalty which will apply for breach of a by-law will be increased to \$500. Clause 39 will increase the maximum penalty for disciplinary offences from \$50 to \$500, and for the damage to property from \$100 to \$1 000. A number of other clauses deal with the boards of these branches of the university. I understand that the Bill will provide for local cooption to the board of the branch at Muresk, and coopted members will be treated as appointed members for the purpose of the council.

Clause 36 will repeal section 22(2) of the Act, which means that branches will no longer need to make an annual report. However, page 9 of the Bill states that the Kalgoorlie Campus Council shall furnish an annual report to the

Curtin University of Technology Council. I am happy with that - that makes sense - but I cannot find where Muresk is picked up. Given that it will no longer have to make an annual report, does that mean it will not have a legal requirement to make any report? It should also be required to make an annual report to the Curtin University of Technology Council.

Clause 38 covers the handling of the original Western Australian Institute of Technology land grant or purchase. I understand that will validate past dealings. I ask the Minister to give some detail about the technical difficulty with the original land dealings and why it is necessary to deal with that matter in this way.

We are happy to support this Bill. We believe that the Kalgoorlie College and the Western Australian School of Mines are important institutions, and I hope that as a result of this amalgamation we will have a superb tertiary institution in Kalgoorlie that will serve the interests of the people in the goldfields region and make a major contribution to tertiary education in Western Australia.

MR THOMAS (Cockburn) [3.23 pm]: I am very pleased to have the opportunity to join with my colleague the shadow Minister for Education in indicating that the Opposition supports this Bill. I congratulate the Government for introducing this Bill, and I wish the people involved in reorganising this new university campus in Kalgoorlie, as it is described, all the best in their endeavours.

Before I make a few observations, I will repeat the question that I asked the Minister earlier. To what extent will the total number of university places in Western Australia be reduced as a consequence of the recent federal Budget?

Mr C.J. Barnett: I am advised that it will have an almost minimal effect next year, of the order of 35 places, but a significant effect in the following years, running into several hundred places.

Mr THOMAS: Is the Minister able to give us those numbers?

Mr C.J. Barnett: I can provide some information, if you like.

Mr THOMAS: I suppose I could put a question on notice, but I am interested in the official view.

The Minister's second reading speech sets out the rationale behind the Bill, which is one that we support. However, his opening paragraph is factually wrong, because he states that the Bill has two main purposes -

The first is to establish a university campus at Kalgoorlie by the amalgamation of the Western Australian School of Mines and the Kalgoorlie College.

That is incorrect to the extent that it implies that it will establish for the first time a university campus in Kalgoorlie. There has been a university campus in Kalgoorlie since the Western Australian Institute of Technology became Curtin University in 1986 or 1987, and prior to that it was a college of advanced education campus as part of WAIT.

The Western Australian School of Mines has been part of the mainstream of tertiary education in Western Australia since the Act to establish WAIT went through the Parliament in the late 1960s. However, it has always been only marginally economic and its existence has been under constant threat. Prior to its incorporation in WAIT, it was administered by the Department of Mines, and no doubt it would not then have been competing with other institutions, or other parts of a large institution, for education resources, but once it became part of WAIT it came under pressure with regard to the rationalisation of resources. I was involved in the 1970s in a dispute about the future of Agricola, its residential college. Those days were, in retrospect, good days in a budgetary sense, but the Hayden Budget of 1975 did make a fairly substantial cut to funding for universities and such institutions - it was nothing compared with what has come since - and caused trauma within the institutions. People cast their eyes upon the Western Australian School of Mines and pointed out that it was 50 per cent more expensive to educate an engineer in Kalgoorlie than at Bentley TAFE, and they suggested that it would be more economic to close down Kalgoorlie and move the school to Bentley.

That argument was strengthened by the fact that during a meeting to discuss the future of that school, Jack Manners, the local manager of Western Mining Corporation, who was a member of the board, announced that the only mine on the golden mile, which was operated by Western Mining Corporation, would close; and the miners were put on notice. Therefore, we would have had a school of mines in a remote town which did not have a mine. However, during the two or three week period that the miners were on notice, the price of gold moved sufficiently for Western Mining to keep that mine going; and in the decades since, the price of gold has seemed to move, if not inexorably upwards, upwards sufficiently for the goldmining industry to prosper, and there are now many mines in that area.

At that time, there was a debate about the future of mining education in Western Australia, because, until then, the School of Mines had effectively had a monopoly on dedicated courses for mining. With the establishment of Murdoch University, which picked up hydrometallurgy, and with the expansion of the petroleum industries in this State, in addition to the traditional mining industries, courses servicing those industries have been developed at the University of Western Australia and also at the main campus of Curtin University at Bentley, and the University of Western Australia has a chair of petroleum engineering which is endowed by Woodside Offshore Petroleum Pty Ltd.

Therefore, the School of Mines no longer has a monopoly on mining education. It is, nonetheless, located in a major mining province.

In promoting the School of Mines, we probably have the best opportunity to set up a regional university. We should grab that opportunity. Western Australia suffers in terms of the range of education available for young people, and others for that matter, because it does not have regional universities. Some major mistakes were made by our predecessors in the 1960s and 1970s when there was an explosion in the number of places in tertiary education and the number of institutions, but none was located outside the metropolitan area. Between the mid-1960s and the mid-1970s three new teachers' colleges - a secondary teachers' college; Mt Lawley teachers' college; Churchlands teachers' college - as well as Murdoch University were built, all within a decade. However, not one was built outside the metropolitan area.

The secondary teachers' college, which was later purchased by the University of Western Australia, Mt Lawley teachers' college and Churchlands teachers' college all became colleges of advanced education, and subsequently became university campuses as part of Edith Cowan University. Had the opportunity been taken then, instead of locating them in the inner suburbs of Perth, to locate one in Kalgoorlie in association with the School of Mines, it would have given it this new cross-disciplinary coverage to aid its growth as a university. Teachers' colleges which would have become universities could have been located in Albany, Bunbury or Geraldton. The State would have been far better off had those institutions been located outside the metropolitan area.

As a member of Parliament I have taken advantage of the opportunity of travel that is presented to me in this job. I have visited a couple of American universities. The tradition in America is to locate universities in small towns. Often those universities are the major industry in the town. It is part of the tradition of tertiary education in the United States that people go away to college. Very often people leave their home town to undertake studies elsewhere. It would be better if there were more opportunities for that sort of education in Western Australia.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I agree with you. I think Australian students miss out on something. In a place like Ann Arbor in Michigan, two-thirds of the kids come from outside the area. It gives them a very rich education.

Mr THOMAS: I have been there. It is the same in Davis, California. The opportunities to locate in regional centres those teachers' colleges, which in the fullness of time have become university campuses, have passed us by. It is unlikely that any more will be built in the foreseeable future; therefore, we must make do with what we have.

The School of Mines in Kalgoorlie represents the best opportunity we have to develop a regional university in Western Australia. To do that, we must look very carefully at what is involved. I was involved in a visit to the School of Mines with a number of my colleagues early this year or late last year, but fairly recently - it was well before the Kalgoorlie by-election. We discussed with the people at the School of Mines their problems, aspirations and future. Some months before our visit a survey had been undertaken that indicated the majority of the staff would rather have been in Perth. If we are to make this institution work, there must be a deliberate understanding by the funding authorities that it will be necessary to spend money to make the system work. It is no good having a situation where people who are working in the School of Mines would rather be working somewhere else, as if the only reason they are there is because they cannot get a job anywhere else; I am not saying that in a pejorative sense, however, it seems that many would prefer that the institution be picked up and put in Bentley for a number of reasons. If an institution is to work properly, money must be spent to make that happen. In fact, we must spend money to attract money.

One priority is that research should be conducted here. At present in Western Australia there are five cooperative research centres. They conduct the peak of research in Western Australia. One of the criteria to qualify as a cooperative research centre is that one of the parties involved must be a university. A rationale for that is that it exposes the high level research to postgraduate and undergraduate students. If a department, institution or a part of a university is to prosper, it ideally has some high level research taking place. If it has high level, well funded research taking place, it will attract researchers and staff and will reach the academic critical mass that will enable it to take off and prosper.

As I indicated earlier, five cooperative research centres are located in this State, three of which in some sense are related to mining - hydrometallurgy, geomechanics and the evolution of Australian landscapes. I suggest a very determined effort must be made to ensure a serious research program is located at the School of Mines. If a serious research program is located in some form or other - I am not suggesting those CRCs can be picked up and moved; they cannot; those decisions have been made - it would be of great benefit to the State. From time to time these opportunities arise and when they do, a very deliberate effort must be made to ensure prestigious, high level research is undertaken at the Kalgoorlie campus of the Western Australian School of Mines. Any one of those three cooperative research centres could easily have a node, a base, there. As it happens, that is not the case. Murdoch University has pipped the School of Mines in terms of hydrometallurgy, as have other institutions in the other fields.

I do not know that legislation will overcome the next problem I will speak of. I am not suggesting any amendments to this Bill to overcome the problem. There is provision within the Bill for a local board which will allocate resources

and determine policies for the Kalgoorlie campus. Largely, according to my reading of the legislation, as it must be - I can think of no other way around this - the senate of Curtin University will call the shots. When that is the case, as it must be, in allocating scarce funds among competing claims, there will also be a temptation to recognise that it is cheaper to train an engineer at Bentley than at Kalgoorlie. As I recall, the order of magnitude involved is 50 per cent.

Although in the past the School of Mines could say that it had a monopoly on these specialist areas of engineering that relate to mining - in some cases it did, but not all - those traditional fields of engineering exclusive to mining that are taught at the School of Mines are no longer the only areas that are required in the mining industry. I have been spending a bit of time campaigning in my electorate in the past couple of months during the winter break. I am quite surprised at the number of people I have come across who work in the mining industry. Under the fly in, fly out arrangements, many people who are employed in mines reside in Yangebup or Bibra Lake. Similarly many people who work for mining companies are located in Perth. A very high proportion of the mining companies' staff are in head offices and laboratories located in Perth. The traditional disciplines that people went to the School of Mines to study if they wanted to pursue a career in the mining industry - that is, geology, mining engineering, mining surveying, and metallurgy - are no longer necessarily those that people will study if they want to work in a mining industry.

Mr C.J. Barnett: If you had told people in the mining industry 20 years ago that in the mid-1990s they would be employing anthropologists, they would have laughed.

Mr THOMAS: I studied anthropology; I should have kept going.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You might have had a real job then.

Mr THOMAS: I have a real job; I have had lots of them. In many cases the information technology, accounting and various disciplines that can be, and are, studied at tertiary institutions and at universities, will be the disciplines that people will go to study, hopefully, at the Kalgoorlie School of Mines, as it is still known in the vernacular, to seek the start of a career in the mining industry. When this new branch of Curtin University is marketing itself, in many cases it will be required to compete with institutions located in Perth. Similarly, when it makes its submissions to the senate of Curtin University for funding, it will have the disadvantage that those on the senate will say that it will cost, say, \$10 to establish a place for a student at Kalgoorlie, but the same place will cost only \$7.50 in Perth. The temptation will be there - on quite sound grounds - to locate those facilities in Perth rather than Kalgoorlie. A deliberate "diseconomy" will be needed to encourage that regional university. As I indicated, it is the best opportunity we have in Western Australia to establish a regional university and one that we should grab, notwithstanding the fact that it will obviously cost more.

In order to achieve that, there must not only be the allocation of resources within the sector but it must also be marketed to students. Attracting students to universities is very competitive. Given that some of the courses taught in Perth will be possibly as sound in terms of establishing a base for a career in the mining industry as courses taught in Kalgoorlie, the new institution will need to market itself to potential students. It has two advantages: First, it will operate in conjunction with Kalgoorlie College. One of the marketing advantages that some universities will be able to avail themselves of - this is as a result of the vocational education and training legislation that we discussed last night - is the opportunity to operate what we would call TAFEs. The distinction between technical education and university education will become blurred. Some of the staff at the Advanced Manufacturing Technology Centre in East Perth, which is a TAFE or a VET, undertake research. The distinction - in many ways an arbitrary distinction - between university education and other education is breaking down. If this Kalgoorlie campus is able to market a range of courses, perhaps to a person who wants to undertake a course prior to undertaking a university course, within the one campus that will give it quite an advantage.

[Leave granted for the member's time to be extended.]

Mr THOMAS: Another advantage the Kalgoorlie campus can use in addressing itself to students is the fact that it is located in Kalgoorlie. Some people would question who would want to live in Kalgoorlie. In fact, Kalgoorlie is a tourist destination - people go there to enjoy the tourist facilities that are available. It is a good proposition for young people who might be looking for a place to study away from home. They would be attracted to Kalgoorlie because it is different from Perth, Bunbury, Albany and Geraldton. It has the sort of ambience that could be quite attractive to students of mining when compared to studying in Perth. Similarly, it has enormous potential in the international market. In fact, that potential is already being realised. All of those issues relate to the fact that the campus has a mining theme - even though many of the courses will not be mining related - and it is located in a mining centre.

Finally, I refer to the close relationship that exists between the School of Mines and the mining industry. In the past, when I had direct involvement with the School of Mines, it was a very close relationship. People used to say jokingly, but not critically, that the School of Mines was, in effect, a subsidiary of Western Mining Corporation.

If one looks at the resources that Western Mining - although it is not alone in its contributions but is probably the largest contributor - has pumped into the school, one sees that they are very substantial. A very substantial proportion of the senior executives of Western Mining Corporation were educated at the School of Mines. There has been a very close relationship between that company, for example, and that institution to the benefit of both. The mining industry as a whole needs to make a conscious statement that it desires a specialist mining university in Western Australia - a mining focused university - and I support that. That involves support in both cash and kind in various ways.

In making that contribution, the mining industry must look at the bigger picture. I told the story earlier about the proposal to close or run down the school in the mid 1970s. A substantial proportion of the mining industry was in favour of that move. It was argued that if we were to have a School of Mines in Western Australia, the most rational place to have it was Perth. Although at that stage there was deep hard rock mining and nickel mining in Kalgoorlie and the goldfields, it was no longer the centre of the mining industry. Those activities comprised the whole mining industry when the School of Mines was established, but we now have bauxite and sand mining in the south west, iron ore mining in the Pilbara and diamond mining in the Kimberley. The mining industry has diversified enormously since the decision was made to establish the School of Mines in Kalgoorlie. If one were to say that the sole criterion for locating a mining school is its convenience to mines, one would then say that it should be located in Perth. That was the argument put forward by those wishing to locate the school at Bentley. That was the argument in the 1970s; and it has been had and lost on a number of occasions.

It has been decided that the School of Mines will stay in Kalgoorlie. I hope that the Government and the industry decide that this will be the preeminent site of mining education in Western Australia. However, that will rely on a number of conscious decisions being made that go against the intuitive economic approach that administrators might be first inclined to make, particularly when education dollars are tight - as they are at the moment and the suggestion is that they will get tighter in the foreseeable future. That being the case, the university must recognise that it will need to fund resources and places at the School of Mines at a greater cost than funding equivalent resources and places in the metropolitan area. There might also need to be an agreement on occasion to pay staff more than they might be paid in the metropolitan area. I know at least one university in Perth that, in order to attract staff who are undertaking high quality research, is prepared to pay quite substantial amounts of money.

Curtin University must recognise that, in order to establish it as a place where prestigious advanced research in the mining industry is undertaken, it might have to pay an additional amount of money to compensate for what are the perceived disadvantages of residing in Kalgoorlie rather than in Perth. I indicated earlier that the State Government must realise that it will be called upon from time to time for additional funding when a decision is made to fund a special program. In Perth, the dollar might go further, but because of the School of Mines' perceived advantages as a regional university, it must be recognised that the money spent in Kalgoorlie will not go as far as it would if it were spent in Perth.

The most critical point is whether the industry will get behind it. I experienced patriotism by the School of Mines students and they were somewhat resentful of the fact that they could be called to study at the Bentley campus. They believed the School of Mines is a school of the industry. Western Mining Corporation and other companies have been closely associated with the school and have taken graduates from it. People who aspire to a career in the mining industry, in whatever discipline, will identify more closely with that institution and will be more enthusiastic about studying and living in Kalgoorlie if they believe the school is taken seriously by the industry. It will mean that industry, in its broader sense, whether in the Pilbara or the south west, must get behind the school. I certainly hope it does. The Opposition extends its best wishes to all the people involved.

MR PENDAL (South Perth) [3.52 pm]: I will take a different attitude from that which has been expressed by the previous speaker and some earlier speakers. I suggest to the House that it is going down the wrong path in passing this Bill. I have no doubt that the Bill will pass, but similarly I have no doubt that we are repeating the mistakes of the past, some of which I will canvass today. We are on the verge of taking one of the most recognised and recognisable tertiary bodies in the world and turning it into one of the most invisible.

In his second reading speech, the Minister referred to the formalised links with Curtin University which would add stature and credibility, both nationally and internationally. I presume it was a reference to the fact that those links are there in reality and they are being formalised by the amalgamation outlined in the first few paragraphs of the Minister's second reading speech. I do not think that anything we will do to this Bill will add to the stature or credibility, nationally or internationally. The reason is that the School of Mines already has that reputation, but bit by bit and because of an attitude which has grown up in Western Australia and across Australia in recent years about tertiary education, that stature and credibility, as well as the factor of being recognised, will be diminished to the point where this House will rue the day that it passed this Bill.

In this country people have become university mad. People have been persuaded to a view that unless one has a tertiary education, one has not been educated. I believe that is wrong.

Mr Cowan: So do I.

Mr PENDAL: I have no doubt that the Deputy Premier will support my attitude towards this Bill.

Mr Cowan: You are going too far there.

Mr PENDAL: By this Bill we are saying that unless an education institution has the name "university" in its title, its value in the world of tertiary education is somehow diminished. That proposition is nonsense. Members have canvassed ways in which the Kalgoorlie School of Mines and the Kalgoorlie College can be enhanced. However, it is not outlined in this Bill.

About seven or eight years ago, when I was a member of the upper House, we were asked by the previous Government to set aside the reputation of one of the best tertiary institutes in Australia - the then Western Australian Institute of Technology. Fortunately, that folly was not followed by all similar bodies in Australia. The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology resisted that pressure. If members were to go to the United States and say that an organisation like the Massachusetts Institute of Technology was inferior because it was not a university, they would be laughed out of the USA. If they were to go to Chicago and talk to the graduates of the John Marshall Law School - a school no less; not a college or a university - and suggest that they could not hold their own against the best in the United States, again, they would be laughed out of the country.

What is at the base of everything we have been doing with tertiary education in this State and nation for the last decade? It has been enveloped by this tertiary madness which says that institutes must be a university or they must be attached to a university. Almost a century of tradition has gone into the enhancement of the reputation of the Kalgoorlie School of Mines. A lot of angry people do not support this Bill and they are people from the mining and business sector who have contributed a lot of money to that school. The Minister said in his second reading speech that -

On the higher education side, the Commonwealth will provide \$6m this year for capital development, together with additional operating funds of \$450 000.

The House should be made aware of the capital investment made by private donors in recent years. People are still making those private donations to enhance the position of the Kalgoorlie School of Mines. They are not making them because they feel a rapport or empathy with Curtin University; they do not. The rapport and the empathy they feel is with the Kalgoorlie School of Mines. They are people from Kalgoorlie and they have investments in Kalgoorlie. Therefore, they are prepared to make donations to the School of Mines because it is a local institution.

This House should put a halt to the whole process across Western Australia and consider the way in which it can empower and enhance the reputation of the smaller tertiary institutions like the School of Mines. We should be looking at extending the School of Mines into places like Port Hedland because it is the centre of another major, but different, mining sector.

Mr Riebeling: You mean Karratha.

Mr PENDAL: The member considers it should be in Karratha and perhaps he is right in that respect. However, there should be a School of Mines campus, north of the twenty-sixth parallel, in a town which is central to the Pilbara and the iron ore industry. It should not be an extension of a university in Perth where the sense of community, which is the very thing that produces the donations I am referring to, is not present.

Some weeks ago there was a not dissimilar - I am not saying it is the same - suggestion of a merger between Curtin and Murdoch universities. If a Bill to this effect comes to the House, I will vote against it. It is only five or six years ago that similar pressure was put on this Parliament by the then federal Minister for Education, John Dawkins, to bring about the merger of the University of Western Australia with Murdoch University, notwithstanding that a second university was created in this State about 18 years before. The same group of people who were telling us that we needed the second institution is now telling us that is no longer the way we should be heading, and we should now be looking down the barrel of mergers. The same people who are telling us we should merge universities abandoned institutes of technology, allegedly, to upgrade them to university status. For the reasons that I have mentioned I do not think there was an enhancement or upgrading at all. Members may say that is the way of the world, and that is what human nature, the taxpayer, business, and academic life demand. I say nonsense to that. I will tell this House of two other great institutions that now exist on the goldfields. Firstly, a world renowned gold conference attracts probably 400 or 500 delegates in a year. Secondly, the diggers and dealers conference attracts 800 delegates in a year. One of those events grew out of the eastern goldfields. When they tried to transfer it to Perth it flopped. The second event began in Perth, but it did not survive in Perth. The only way it flourished was through its transfer to Kalgoorlie. Now we have a spectacle where each year those two essential conferences in the mining sector are in Kalgoorlie. There is no magic attached to that - except perhaps the magic that is Kalgoorlie. In that respect, I agree with the member for Cockburn when he talked about the area being rich in tourism as well as its obvious mineral wealth.

Mr Ainsworth: You should mention the mining expo as well.

Mr PENDAL: I thank the member for Roe, because the expo similarly makes my point. Every person in this House, no matter to what political party they belong, espouses the notion of decentralised activity, yet when given the

opportunity we all go to water. This is not the occasion where we should be emphasising Curtin University and the Bentley campus. Incidentally, I would be something of a beneficiary, because it is right alongside my electorate.

However, at this point in our history we should be enhancing the prospects of real decentralisation in Western Australia. I accept what the Minister says, for example, that it is difficult to get adequate staff of a senior staff level for the School of Mines. I will put something that should appeal to those economic rationalists in this place. In the day of workplace agreements we would not find it difficult to attract people at associate professorial level to live on the goldfields if we made incentives sufficient to attract them there in the first place. Even if it takes \$200 000 a year plus a car and some decent accommodation to attract an associate professor to Kalgoorlie, it would mean that another industry is growing in a regional area - that is, education. What a glorious thing it would be if we found that in order for young people to achieve their ambitions to specialise in the industry they would have to go to Kalgoorlie to study. Kalgoorlie is one of the few places in Western Australia that has almost everything under the sun except a surf lifesaving club.

Mr Ainsworth: There is one close by!

Mr PENDAL: I know that the member for Roe understands my point; that is, by virtue of these views we could be switching channels. We could be saying that Kalgoorlie should become not just the centre of a minerals industry, that it has been for a century, not just a major tourist destination, but in the next 50 years it could become the world centre for mining and minerals education. However, by our action today we will be diminishing the role of Kalgoorlie and the value of regional activity and decentralisation in Australia all in the name of two things: Firstly, the almighty dollar; and, secondly, this tertiary madness that says we must attach the school to a university to give it status and transfer it onto a city campus.

Mr Trenorden: You must have salt water for education!

Mr PENDAL: If members will give me a bit of a go towards the end of the session I may be able to move my select committee. I know the member for Kalgoorlie is anxious to get to the bottom of salinity! That is flippant. We are missing a major opportunity if we pass this Bill.

I agree with the Minister's statement that a review of higher education in regional centres suggested that benefits might flow from greater cooperation between Kalgoorlie College and the School of Mines. However, the word is "cooperation." It does not say "merger", more particularly it does not say "submerger". I use that word advisedly because that is what will happen. The Kalgoorlie School of Mines will be submerged to the point, as I said in my opening remarks, where we will not recognise it. It will go from one of the most recognisable bodies in the world to one of the most invisible. That is why it is inconsistent with that review that was referred to by the Minister.

Mr Thomas: Does the member for South Perth know that the Colorado School of Mines, which is also one of the best in the world, is only a small part of a larger institution that has other components like a teachers' college and things like that?

Mr PENDAL: Yes. However, Colorado and the university network system in the United States is quite different from that which we experience in Australia. We are now heading towards this idea of the mega-university. We have heard in recent months proposals for mergers of universities, and we had a similar proposal from a former federal Minister for Education, John Dawkins, to which the upper House of this State put a stop. One cannot compare the situation in Australia, where there is a tendency towards strong public control in tertiary education being exercised by the Commonwealth Government, with the United States, where that factor does not exist. In fact, what happens in Colorado and in comparable places confirms the view I am taking. Again, it will mean that the influence by local businesses, which will be the major employers of graduates in the eastern goldfields, will be diminished to the point where people in Perth will once again make those crucial decisions. We should learn a lesson from what happened, for example, with the WA Academy of Performing Arts. That was once a stand alone and highly regarded state institution which is now attached to, or enveloped by - I can never work out what has happened to it - Edith Cowan University.

We have introduced into tertiary education this notion which we introduced into farming a few years ago; that is, get big or get out. Why there is not a place for easily recognisable smaller tertiary bodies, I do not know. Perhaps some of the problems may not have been experienced by the Academy of Performing Arts in recent years had it been kept as a stand alone organisation that was closest to the people it was serving and which in turn could be influenced by them.

In conclusion, I think we will rue the day that we have continued down the path of allowing an instantly recognisable school of mines with an international reputation to be submerged into a wider metropolitan based university. It will be to the detriment of Kalgoorlie and Western Australia.

MS ANWYL (Kalgoorlie) [4.12 pm]: I support the Bill, but with some concerns. I am pleased to have had the benefit of hearing the speech of the member for South Perth. He raised a number of concerns that are circulating in the Western Australian School of Mines, in the goldfields, and in the mining industry generally.

The Western Australian School of Mines has been part of the Curtin University of Technology for quite some time. I oppose the movement of courses from the School of Mines to an institution in Perth. However, that issue and the overall amalgamation are quite distinct issues. I see that there is a unique opportunity for the advancement of education in the goldfields generally by this piece of legislation. I understand that is the view of the majority of people who are employed at those institutions. The cynics - who may be in time the people with the wisdom - point out that there may be some vested interests among those academic staff who are seeking to remove -

Mr Pental: Just like the vested interests of the academic staff at the Western Australian Institute of Technology when it became a university. I do not think it should be driven by them.

Ms ANWYL: I agree with the member that the future of both the Kalgoorlie College and the Western Australian School of Mines should not be driven by the staff exclusively. However, there are some benefits, which I will address in my remarks.

My primary concern is in the same vein as those raised by the member for South Perth. It is very clear that Curtin University of Technology should be an extremely responsible party to a very mature and cooperative partnership if the goldfields, and indeed the State, are to benefit from this amalgamation. I will address in more detail later concerns raised within my electorate in response to the clauses relating to assets and the control of the proposed Kalgoorlie Campus Council, which is to be at the behest of the Curtin University Council. The assets have been built up in the goldfields over a long period. Kalgoorlie College was established pursuant to the Colleges Act in 1983. Its establishment was very much as a result of the foresight of some community leaders, not all of whom are in Kalgoorlie Boulder, who saw a need for regional education and who were prepared to pursue that. I pay tribute in particular to Ray Finlayson, a former mayor of Kalgoorlie, who became the first Chairman of the Kalgoorlie College Council. He had a vision for the goldfields which he pursued to the utmost both in his capacity in local government and as a well respected member of the community. His vision was to see Esperance become a part of the goldfields. We acknowledge the contribution that could be made by participation of Esperance in the goldfields generally. The Esperance Training Centre has improved conditions out of sight for those wishing to study in Esperance. I imagine that those who propose this amalgamation hope that it will further enhance the availability of education for not only those in Kalgoorlie Boulder, but also those in the whole region.

Both the member for Cockburn and the member for South Perth alluded to the long and proud history of the Western Australian School of Mines. I have no doubt it is a world class facility. I took up the comments of the Minister for Resources and Energy on an ABC news bulletin one evening when he suggested that there was a need to establish a world class facility. I asked him whether he realised that we have a world class facility, namely the School of Mines in Kalgoorlie Boulder. It is not enough to suggest that the School of Mines can now become a part of some other facility. As I said, I think that is a separate argument to the consolidation of the college and the School of Mines. The college and the School of Mines can certainly complement each other by sharing resources, for example.

The Western Australian School of Mines has been a source of great pride to the people of the goldfields. There is no doubt that some of its former pupils are among some of the most illustrious mining industry leaders in this State, and indeed the world; for example, Mr Graham Smith at Eltin Open Pit Operations Pty Ltd.

The moves towards making the college a university college commenced a long time ago. At page 5 of the second reading speech, the Minister said that the detailed proposal to amalgamate WASM and Kalgoorlie College emanated from a study completed in October 1993. I do not believe that is correct. The first forays into the exercise were made quite some time before that. In fact, I believe a proposal was before the then Labor Government in July 1992 that a university college be established in the north west. I understand that is detailed in the Pilbara 21 study. At the time the Labor Cabinet approved the concept of two colleges; that is, one in the Pilbara and one in Kalgoorlie Boulder.

I was able to track down some subsequent history to this matter in the other place where Hon Tom Stephens asked the former Minister for Education a question about what was proposed. In regard to the north west, the Minister stated that the previous Labor Government through the Pilbara 21 study recommended that the Hedland and Karratha Colleges be made separate campuses of the university of the north west. He also said that following requests from the community of Kalgoorlie he had asked Professor Stanley to look at the amalgamation of the School of Mines, which is a branch of the University of Technology, with Kalgoorlie College. It is important to get the history right.

The road to amalgamation has been very long. In February 1994 this Government stated it would bring forward a Bill. That is some time ago now. The initial community request acknowledged in the excerpt from the other place looked to the concept of regional centres as being essential. I do not propose to labour that point. In my short time in this place, I have already spoken about that issue. It is worth noting that the vision of people partly responsible for the inception of the Kalgoorlie College, as it now is, had a mind to diversification. There is a high level of consciousness that one industry leaves a centre vulnerable. For example, we have only the mining industry as our main economic source, therefore we will be vulnerable to the vagaries of the economy. We have seen that in the past in Kalgoorlie-Boulder.

If we look to places like New England, or Colorado, or to the university towns of Oxford and Cambridge in the United Kingdom, we note that education can be a reason for establishing a university. I need only look to my childhood. As a child I moved to Townsville because the University of James Cook had just been established and it was my father's first academic posting. In those days Townsville was a small place. It has grown, and has established a university which is now held in high esteem with its marine biology and marine science courses. That shows that we can have a university of which a part is recognised at world level. That would be my hope for the WA School of Mines.

One hurdle that has been faced by the amalgamation process has been the naming of the institution. Although the preferred choice of the Kalgoorlie-Boulder people would be "The Curtin University of Kalgoorlie" - I see the Minister for Education shaking his head. The initial choice would be to have a University College of Kalgoorlie, but the acronym led to a few problems. I understand that name was forsaken for the Kalgoorlie University College. Now, of course, we have the Curtin University of Technology, Kalgoorlie Campus. The only comment I make about that is it appears the word "campus" is somewhat superfluous. The naming of the institution has caused some grief in my community. This goes back to my initial comment about the loss of autonomy evidenced by the transfer of assets and a perception by the public in that regard.

Also of concern is the need for the Kalgoorlie Campus Council to take direction from the Curtin University Council. The preferred choice, as I understand it, was not acceptable to the Curtin Council. I am sure the Minister will respond in that regard. It may be that in time the word "campus" will simply suffer from attrition, and it may not be highly evidenced within the institution.

The naming issue was also very relevant to the identity of the WA School of Mines. I turn briefly now to the whole issue of the WA School of Mines. I suggest that the future of the School of Mines and the amalgamation should remain separate issues. There are some overlapping concerns but the School of Mines will be enhanced by the amalgamation. However, some clear direction is necessary on what exactly Curtin University proposes should happen with the School of Mines in future. I am mindful that WASM has been part of Curtin University for a long time. Therefore, the argument relating to assets being easily swallowed up by Curtin University for its own purposes rather than for the purposes of Kalgoorlie similarly has applied to WASM for many years. It could have occurred, and now we are having some argument about that.

The timing of the decision by the School of Mines to suggest that the first and second years of three and four year courses should be moved to the Perth campus is unfortunate, because it has caused a great deal of uncertainty within the Kalgoorlie-Boulder community and perhaps the goldfields community. There is some support for the transfer. I have been approached by a number of students at the School of Mines who see it as part of the future for the institution. However, the transfer of the courses is not fully explained by Curtin University or the School of Mines to the community. I do not support the transfer of the courses, unless we have some assurances about further enhancement to the School of Mines, as a result.

Mr C.J. Barnett: The objective is to increase the number of students doing the courses -

Mr D.L. Smith: Is that within Kalgoorlie?

Mr C.J. Barnett: Yes - within the whole course and therefore within Kalgoorlie.

Ms ANWYL: Although at the moment I do not support the transfer of those courses, I reserve my decision because if we can have a full explanation of the benefits, perhaps there will be some acceptance. The timing is unfortunate. WASM wants to get out of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, but this is not the first time these issues have arisen. The assets of the Kalgoorlie College are significant; not only is there the structure of the college but also there is the Goldfields Arts Centre which is also very significant -

Mr Thomas: Is it like the Opera House?

Ms ANWYL: I would not go that far. It is as close as Kalgoorlie is ever likely to get to having an opera house.

Mr Trenorden: Ballarat has a beautiful opera house - or theatre.

Ms ANWYL: There is some hope then! Ballarat also has a very successful School of Mines. They are not disparate places. I have spoken about that matter before, too.

The assets could have gone at any time.

[Leave granted for speech to be continued.]

Debate thus adjourned.

[Continued on page 4780.]

GRIEVANCE - PETROL PRICES

MR CATANIA (Balcatta) [4.31 pm]: I direct my grievance to the Minister for Fair Trading. I have given notice to the Minister so she is aware of what my grievance will be about. It is primarily on the lack of a petrol pricing policy in Western Australia. My grievance is on behalf of two sections of the community. The first is consumers who buy fuel from retailers and experience a great variance in price. From Wanneroo in the north to Fremantle in the south the same oil companies in 10 or 12 locations will have 10 or 12 different fuel prices. This is of concern to the consumers of fuel in Western Australia. They are staggered at that variance in price. Information from some of my constituents indicates that only last weekend the price varied from 65.8¢ to 75.8¢ a litre. They wonder why.

The other section is small business. I am concerned about the effect of oil companies' multisite franchising on small business and in turn on the choice offered to consumers and the price they will be forced to pay. At the moment multisite franchising has been adopted by one particular oil company. However, if other oil companies adopt a similar management procedure many small fuel retailers will go out of business. That in turn will be to the detriment not only of small businesses, but also of consumers.

My grievance is based on oil companies obtaining control of the retail market - they already have control of the wholesale market - which I believe will have a disastrous effect on competition between small businesses and the goods they supply. The Motor Trade Association of Western Australia has said to the Government on a number of occasions that the price and supply of goods in this State would be dramatically affected if that were allowed to continue. I believe the Premier has met with the association. Has the Minister done likewise? What commitments, if any, have been made by the Government to assure the public of Western Australia that the possibility of a fuel monopoly by a few oil companies has not been created in Western Australia? The dominance of the market by oil companies will simply create a monopoly rather than the competitive atmosphere this Government is trying to foster. The Minister should be lobbying to ensure that these companies maintain the 5 per cent ratio around Australia so they cannot dominate the market and also that the independent operators exist to provide that price competition. Any independents should be maintained because they are the price leaders in the market. Maintaining their presence helps to fight that monopoly.

I ask the Minister in her portfolio responsibility of Fair Trading to ensure that an effort is made by her department and the Government to develop a pricing policy that does not eat the competition and in effect create monopolies for big oil companies, which is occurring by virtue of their management. Even products such as milk and bagged confectionary are sold by those large companies. They are virtually supermarkets with fuel outlets, rather than fuel outlets offering a variety of goods. Now not only do the multisite franchises fail to offer a service, but also the goods they sell are between 20 and 30 per cent dearer than good sold by an independent down the road. Once a multisite franchising monopoly service is created, the consumers will get less service. That has been experienced already. There are no longer attendants at the pumps, but rather one operator working on the console for the entire fuel outlet. Such a monopoly will also result in more expensive fuel and more costly products in the fuel supermarkets.

I ask the Minister to ensure that the Government is aware of the problem and that something is done to protect consumers and the wellbeing of small business operators who are still in the trade, because without legislative protection they will not be able to survive. In the end consumers will not have a competitive situation, but a monopoly, and ultimately they will pay a higher price for their fuel and other products.

MRS EDWARDES (Kingsley - Minister for Fair Trading) [4.38 pm]: I thank the member opposite for again bringing this matter to the attention of the House. It has been raised on previous occasions, but it is always important to update the House on the situation with petrol prices, although I am sure constituents provide each member with concerns that are raised from time to time. The multisite franchising concept was supported by the Government and was to be examined by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission recently concluded an inquiry into the petroleum products declaration, which included also the issue of multisite franchising. The commission concluded that this arrangement is predominately a means of reducing costs by spreading overheads and that multisite franchising should provide for increased managerial efficiency through flatter structures and lower costs, and that no action is required on this matter at this time. I have not had the opportunity of raising these points with any members of the ACCC, but of course it does not necessarily reconcile with what we have been led to believe.

Mr Catania: I think that the ACCC and the Trade Practices Commission have been very weak in this area.

Mrs EDWARDES: On the broader question of enhanced market competition, the ACCC also provided a range of recommendations which, if adopted, would lower market barriers and encourage the entry of significant viable independent importers and marketers. If we are really interested in lowering the market price, the significant premise that determines whether that eventuates is the development of independent buying groups buying directly at the wholesale level. If that does not occur and we do not have the increased imports on which the commission has been basing its assumptions, then -

Mr Catania: The importers will also have no real retail outlets; that is the problem.

Mrs EDWARDES: That is correct. It would mean that the premise upon which the commission has based its assumptions for lower market price will fall. I will ensure that we in Western Australia continue to monitor this and that the ACCC understands what is happening here on the ground, particularly given the fact that Western Australia is the largest State.

If I may turn to the current retail petrol prices in Perth, I think everybody would recognise that we are seeing some of the lowest prices in Perth for months. We conducted a quick survey of the northern suburbs, because the member mentioned to me yesterday that if someone goes from the northern suburbs to Fremantle, the prices in the northern suburbs are particularly high. Living there and representing people in the northern suburbs, I immediately agreed, although I indicated that on Sunday garages were selling petrol at 66¢ a litre. Like most people in my electorate, we went out immediately to fill up our motor vehicle before retailers changed their minds.

Mr Leahy: You know that some service stations were paying wholesale 71.5¢ a litre and only the subsidy given back to selected sites from the oil companies enabled retailers to do that.

Mrs EDWARDES: That is the concern which I am not sure that the ACCC has picked up in its assessment of multisite franchising.

Picking up on the prices in the northern suburbs, at the BP service station at Carine unleaded was 66.9¢ and leaded 69.1¢; Caltex at Carine, 66.9¢ and 69.1¢; Shell at Warwick, 66.9¢ and 69.1¢; BP at Greenwood, 68.8¢ and 71¢; Shell at Glengarry, 66.9¢ and 69.1¢; BP at Padbury, 66.9¢ and 69.1¢; BP at Whitford, 66.9¢ and 69.1¢; BP at Mullaloo, 77.7¢ and 79.9¢. Members might consider that is because of Mullaloo's localised area.

Mr Leahy: No independent site could have sold it at a loss in order to match the price. Consumers go to the multisites and therefore the independents close down. That has happened right through the metropolitan area.

Mrs EDWARDES: At the Shell service station at Ocean Reef unleaded was 68.8¢ and leaded was 71¢, and at BP Express Beaumaris it was 68.8¢ and 71¢. I will be raising with the ACCC its conclusion on multisite franchising because, as members opposite have indicated, although we can say that there has been a level of competitive market forces, if we are looking at the various prices within the same area among different operators, the points the members raised are well made. We must ensure that the ACCC in looking after consumers' interests is also fully aware of the facts when it makes its decisions, because sometimes if its conclusions are based on premises which either do not eventuate or are not fully thought through in the first place, they can prove to be false or incorrect.

Mr Catania: It has allowed predatory prices for 25 years. All that does is close little independent operators.

Mrs EDWARDES: Petrol pricing is a significant issue involving many concerns on competitive pricing. We in Western Australia will continue to monitor this and ensure that the ACCC takes notice of Western Australian consumers so that they are able to receive the most competitive petrol prices, not only in the metropolitan area but also in country regions.

GRIEVANCE - DOGS, OWNERSHIP RESTRICTION

MRS van de KLASHORST (Swan Hills) [4.46 pm]: I address my grievance to the Minister for Local Government on a very delicate issue. I want to ask him to make a special case for someone on compassionate grounds. I am very aware that the Dog Act allows people in the Shire of Mundaring, Hills shires and other metropolitan shires to have only two dogs on their properties. I certainly applaud that in light of the fact that we have had to amend the Dog Act because of attacks by dangerous dogs. I am concerned in this case for one family, although I know other families may possibly be in a similar situation.

Mr Pandal: You are trying to put the bite on the Minister!

Mrs van de KLASHORST: Possibly. The Shire of Mundaring has acted in a very proper way which I must commend. Representatives are going right round the shire spending a considerable amount of time checking up on how many dogs each person owns. As part of that check they have come across a family which owns three very small dogs, one of which is a Maltese terrier which is registered with the City of Stirling but living in Mundaring. The other two dogs are registered with the Shire of Mundaring. All three dogs have been registered since three months of age and they are all sterilised. This family came to see me. The lady and gentlemen involved are elderly, and the lady was extremely upset because the shire representatives had asked them to destroy one of their dogs and keep only two.

Mr Board: How does one choose?

Mrs van de KLASHORST: That is their dilemma. These elderly people have been used to having the dogs around for an extremely long time. They do not know how they will be able to get rid of one of them. One Maltese terrier is 13 years of age, another Maltese terrier is six years of age and the retriever is 13.5 years of age. They are

immaculately cared for by these loving, warm people, and are properly fenced in. They have always been licensed with the local authority. They attend the vet regularly. Two of them do not have very long to live. Let us face it, dogs of 13.5 years and 13 years have a very limited life expectancy. I was quite upset for this elderly couple when their case came to my attention and when they called in to see me. I am wondering if there is any way in which the Minister can assist them.

Had we been talking about three large dogs wandering the neighbourhood, causing havoc to all and sundry, I would have not have been asking the Minister for some consideration on compassionate grounds. Dogs that are a nuisance must be controlled. People who are irresponsible when looking after dogs must not be able to have them on their property. However, these are elderly people who love their three dogs, and they ask that they be allowed to keep the dogs, which they have had for a long time, until one of the dogs dies. This couple have told me that they will not replace a dog once one dies; however, they do not want to put one of the dogs down as they want them to complete their natural lives. The Minister is compassionate, and I ask whether an approach from these people, supported by me, will result in his considering the circumstances to assist this upset elderly couple.

MR OMODEI (Warren - Minister for Local Government) [4.51 pm]: I thank the member for Swan Hills for her very compassionate approach to this matter. I have described myself as the most sensitive Minister in Cabinet, although I am sure that view is not shared by some members opposite! This issue of dog ownership requires some sensitivity.

Every person, as the member mentioned, is allowed to own two dogs by right, and in most cases local government has a policy of allowing ownership of no more than two dogs. However, an appeals mechanism is available. One needs specific council approval to own three to six dogs, and the ownership of more than six dogs requires a kennel licence. When an appeal comes to me as Minister, a thorough process is followed.

As members will know, a number of instances have arisen of dogs attacking people, and lengthy debate ensued in this place on amendments to the Dog Act. When we send an officer of the department to a person's place, the officer usually attends with the council ranger and takes photographs of the property. The officer records the size of the yard. To determine the nature and behaviour of the dogs, he or she will interview the neighbours to determine acceptance or non-acceptance of the dogs, and whether the dogs bark or roam. The cleanliness of the yard and other matters are considered.

I have with me some examples of the detail of these files, including photographs. It is a thorough process. For example, in one case the owner of two poodles wanted approval for a third poodle, and the dogs were of varying ages. The size of the dog is important in these matters; if they are large dogs in the aggressive dog category, to be kept in a small yard, a careful assessment will be made.

At the same time, this issue is to be determined by councils. In most cases the councils have adopted the policy that the Minister's approval is required for the ownership of any more than two dogs. Councils could have a more flexible approach, but it is usually easier for a council to handball the hard decision to the Minister. Therefore, whatever decision is made is that of the terrible Minister!

Mr Riebeling: Like you did with cats.

Mr OMODEI: We have not done anything with cats; that is up to local government. It is a matter of concern. The member for Ashburton asked for it, but the Labor Party wants to kill all cats and it will lose the next election on that policy.

These animals are important to constituents of the member for Swan Hills who are concerned that through a variety of circumstances they have more than the allowable number of dogs. The council has the ability to approve those dogs, and under a set policy the Minister has the ability to look at the case. Speaking straight off the shoulder about the case to which the member referred, the Minister would probably uphold the appeal. If the dogs were pit bull terriers or Rottweilers, the case would be looked at in a different manner.

The Mundaring Council deserves a pat on the back as it is one of the metropolitan councils which has looked at dog numbers in its municipality. I understand that it has raised the number of dog registrations from 500 in recent years to 5 000. It is looking at a local law under the Dog Act to allow three dogs on a property of 10 000m² or 20 000m², and four dogs on property of more than 20 000m². That does not solve the problem of small lots of 1 000m² or 2 000m² and permission for the ownership of a third dog.

In cases of special circumstances, the conditions applied are very strict. Usually the recommendation from me to the council is that the exception will apply only to the appellant at his or her current resident, and only to the specific dogs currently under his or her care. Also, if any of the dogs die or are no longer kept on the property, no replacement dog is to be obtained. All reasonable steps are to be taken to control or minimise the barking of the dogs, and the dogs are to be confined to the property at all times unless they are restrained on a leash. Also, all perimeter fencing must be intact and perimeter gates must be closed to ensure that the dogs are contained in the property. Another condition is that the exception may be reviewed if valid complaints are received or the conditions

of the approval are breached, and all dogs must also be sterilised within three months of the date of the letter advising of the decision exception. Therefore, where I uphold an appeal for more than two dogs, the conditions which apply are stringent. If anybody wants to complain, regardless of whether it is a large or small dog, that will again trigger the approval process and the owner will be asked to comply with the exception conditions.

In the case of seniors or family breakdown, where a person with a dog comes to live with other people who have two dogs already, members will find that local government will be compassionate. A number of rangers have assessed property with departmental officers who have said to me in correspondence, "If you uphold an appeal, I would agree under certain conditions."

I commend the member for Swan Hills for raising this sensitive issue. In the case in question, if the member refers it to me, I am sure we can placate the concerns of her constituents.

GRIEVANCE - HARDING DAM ROAD ACCIDENT

MR RIEBELING (Ashburton) [4.58 pm]: My grievance is directed to the Minister for Water Resources in relation to a matter aired on a number of occasion in this place regarding an accident which occurred on 8 May on the road leading to Harding Dam. I do not want to air what occurred on that occasion again.

The last time this matter was mentioned in this place, the Minister apologised for misleading the House. It was a quick withdrawal of what he said previously. However, prior to the withdrawal, he berated members on this side for suggesting he was incorrect. His apology was made in a quick statement which passed without a great deal of notice.

Over the last six weeks or so I have obtained more information about the incident, and it appears that the Minister has misled the House on not only the earlier issue - namely, that three truck loads of water were taken instead of the one he claimed - but also a number of other instances. I am not suggesting that he did it deliberately; I suggest that his competency levels are such that he is incapable of giving this House proper information.

Firstly, I refer to a speech the Minister made on 19 June in reference to vehicle access to the road to Harding Dam. On page 2912 of *Hansard* of 19 June, the Minister said -

The member did not indicate that many people travel on the road, and that permission of the Water Corporation is not necessary to do so. Anyone can do so. Travelling on the road is not illegal.

On the next page he said -

The member is leading the House to believe that the truck should not have been there as it did not have permission to be on the road.

The Minister said that on a number of occasions during that speech. I have a photograph of a Water Corporation sign which has been at the start of this road for a number of years. It states

Operating area. Restricted to authorised personnel only. No entry.

It gets worse than that. I hope the Minister now has access to the file. This matter was raised two months ago. On the file that I have - I am happy to table these documents - there is a letter to another company about access to the road and it says -

The access road is currently restricted to Water Corporation personnel only as it is registered as a reserve for the water supply pipeline and not a gazetted or private road.

The Minister glossed over the fact that this truck was operating at night. I have a copy of a letter of approval for someone to access that road. One of the conditions is that travel on the road be limited to daylight hours only. That is a normal condition of access to this road. The Minister also said on a number of occasions that the Water Authority's statements indicate that both drivers said the truck's lights were on. He should have said that an additional letter was written in reference to that report by the ranger saying that was not correct and that the lights were not on. The Minister should have known that because that letter was dated 2 June and the Minister's file should have indicated that.

The Minister went to great lengths to point out that I should have come to this place with statements, etc. I now have a copy of the driver's statement given to the police, which says that the truck did not have lights on. I am happy to table that also. I hoped the Minister would correct the mistakes he made to this House on the first day back, but he did not. He has misled this House in a number of ways. I hope that he will now correct the mistakes he has made.

There are a number of other issues that I will not have time to pursue. I presume the Minister has a copy of all the documents that I have. Why has he not pursued this? One of the matters the Minister said he knew nothing about, but which was the Water Authority's main concern in negotiations with the Buckeridge Group of Companies, was that BGC was not involved; it was a subcontractor. The Water Authority's letters are all addressed to BGC. The

other condition that I said was the stumbling block was the maintenance of the road after the contract had finished. The letter of 30 April from the Water Corporation refers to those conditions that I mentioned in my speech, which the Minister thought were incorrect. I ask the Minister to provide a correct and accurate description of what occurred at that time and to correct the misinformation that he has given to the House on a number of occasions. I also suggest that now is the time for him to do it. If he does not do it, another motion will be moved in this place to insist upon it.

MR NICHOLLS (Mandurah - Minister for Water Resources) [5.05 pm]: I am somewhat concerned with the statements made by the member for Ashburton for two reasons. The first is that the member has failed to show the decency that he demands from me. At least I had the decency to come into the House when I received the information from the Water Corporation that the information with which it had provided me of only one load being taken was incorrect. Three loads were taken and the cost of the water was \$34 not \$19. Secondly, the member suggested that somehow I, as Minister, had directed the corporation not to take action and made suggestions about what took place, even though there is some discrepancy. The problem is that I had the decency to correct the information. Unfortunately, the decency limits itself only to the facts that I get wrong. The member can make allegations and innuendoes and take no responsibility at all!

Mr Riebeling: What fact did I get wrong?

Mr NICHOLLS: The suggestion that I directed that no action be taken. That is false. What evidence does the member have that that occurred?

Mr Riebeling: Everything I have suggested about this case has proved to be correct.

Mr NICHOLLS: That is not true.

Mr Riebeling: I suggested that the lights were off, which you have denied all along.

Mr NICHOLLS: While the member may believe that the lights were not on -

Mr Riebeling: Did you see the report that said that and the attachment to that report?

Mr NICHOLLS: The only reports that I have seen are the reports provided by the Water Corporation.

Mr Riebeling: The attachment to that report that you read was that the driver said that that part of the report was correct.

Mr NICHOLLS: Are we talking about appendix B? It is from the service delivery manager and it says that he received a phone call at 6.25 from Mr Kevin Cutmore, who is the ranger in question. He went to the site and took a statement from Mr Cutmore. He asked him what had happened. This was right after the accident.

Mr Riebeling: Do you have the police report?

Mr NICHOLLS: Hang on; the member should listen to me. His statement and the record provided to me indicates that Mr Cutmore said that he approached a steep rise or a hill. He said that when he was about halfway up the steep rise travelling at about 80 kilometres an hour, he noticed a set of lights and the appearance of the front of a large truck.

Mr Riebeling: Have you the letter dated 2 June from Cutmore?

Mr NICHOLLS: Hang on. We are talking about information that has been taken from a person right after the accident.

Mr Riebeling: Have a look at the police report.

Mr NICHOLLS: When was the police report filled out?

Mr Riebeling: The police report is dated 8 May.

Mr NICHOLLS: Was the police report filled out right after the accident?

Mr Riebeling: Presumably.

Mr NICHOLLS: Of course it was not. I assume the member knows that the person in question is taking legal action against the corporation. The member and I know that one statement says that the lights were on and another says that he did not see them. I do not know the truth. I do not know how the member knows. We are dealing with an unfortunate incident which I believe will be resolved in court. The advice I have is that the police have closed the case and will take no further action. If the member is suggesting the police have not done their job properly, I would like evidence of that. If he is suggesting that something untoward is happening, he should substantiate it. He is raking mud in this Parliament and using the privilege of this House for innuendo and allegations in order to help someone. I have no problem if that is what he wants to do, but he should be honest about it.

Mr Riebeling: I am after you for misleading this House.

Mr NICHOLLS: That is a different matter altogether. I have provided information to this House.

Mr Riebeling: Incorrect information.

Mr NICHOLLS: After the information was given about the number of loads taken, I came into the Chamber and corrected that.

Mr Riebeling: What about access to the road?

Mr NICHOLLS: Irrespective of access to the road, can the member tell me that no private vehicles travel on that road?

Mr Riebeling: No.

Mr NICHOLLS: Can the member tell me that it is illegal to travel on that road?

Mr Riebeling: Your department says it is.

Mr NICHOLLS: The member knows that is not true.

Mr Riebeling: You are the Minister. I read out to you the sign which says that people cannot go on the road without permission.

Mr NICHOLLS: It says that access is restricted. How many vehicles a day travel on that road and how many of those vehicles are driven by tourists?

Mr Riebeling: Do not ask me. You are the Minister for that department.

Mr NICHOLLS: No I am not.

Mr Riebeling: Yes you are.

Mr NICHOLLS: I am the Minister for the Water Corporation, which is not a department.

Mr Riebeling: If you do not want to withdraw your statements which are inaccurate, that is fine. The Press knows you misled this House.

Mr NICHOLLS: Is the member aware that many private vehicles travel on that road? Many of them are tourists or are not Water Corporation personnel. Is he suggesting that I should instruct the Water Corporation to prevent everybody from travelling on that road because he, as the local member, does not believe they should be able to do so?

Mr Riebeling: Your department says that.

Mr NICHOLLS: It is not a department, it is the Water Corporation.

GRIEVANCE - HIGH SCHOOLS, KINROSS

MR W. SMITH (Wanneroo) [5.12 pm]: I direct my grievance to the Minister for Education in relation to the need to establish a high school in Kinross. In doing so, I emphasise that this grievance should not be seen as undermining the excellent record of this relatively new Minister for Education, which record has been well recognised by me and my constituents.

Three years ago I stood in this House to highlight the abysmal record of the previous Labor Government in failing to make adequate provision for the educational needs of the State, particularly in the fast growing electorate of Wanneroo. Despite the coalition Government's best efforts, my electorate is still suffering from the lack of work and neglect of the previous Labor Government. It has impacted on the electorate not only in the provision of new schools, but also in the area of school maintenance. I find it hard to believe, as do many of my constituents, that it was possible for a Labor Government, which advocated a free education for all, to fail in its responsibility during its term in government to make adequate provision in the educational area. That failure has been to the detriment of young Western Australians.

When this Government took office in 1993 no new high schools had been established for more than four years. Since that time, following some gentle lobbying and persuasion from me, the coalition Government, under Richard Court, has responded by establishing primary schools in Kinross and Merriwa and completing supplementary stages at Clarkson Primary School and Belridge Senior High School. Construction of the \$5.95m second stage of Ballajura Community College is well under way, as are the Currambine Primary School and Clarkson High School. The Minister for Education has also recently announced a \$6m increase in the budget allocation to reduce outstanding maintenance at schools. There is now a demonstrated need for the establishment of the proposed high school at

Kinross to service the suburbs of Kinross, Joondalup, Currambine, Iluka and Burns. Having made that statement, I will briefly reflect on the history of Clarkson High School, which presently services most of those suburbs.

I begin with the deep concerns I shared with the students, parents and staff regarding the severe overcrowding at Ocean Reef Senior High School in 1993, which was a legacy from the previous Labor Government. By 1994-95 there were plans for approximately 14 temporary classrooms on that site. I need not tell members of the extreme distress in the community because of this overcrowding. They requested my assistance, as the local member, to address the matter urgently. Following consultation with the then Minister for Education, he agreed to the establishment of Clarkson High School a full 12 months ahead of schedule. He provided the appropriate resources for Ocean Reef Senior High School to address the overcrowding, and consequently Clarkson High School was opened in 1996 at an off-site campus at Craigie Senior High School.

At this point I acknowledge the dedication of Mr Howard Crump, who will also meet the Minister with me to request that serious consideration be given to providing travel concessions for those students travelling to Craigie. Mr Crump played a major role in achieving the facility at Clarkson High School. He has now been elected President of the Clarkson High School Parents and Citizens' Association. Setting aside party politics for the moment, I also acknowledge the invaluable contribution to the community, in relation to education needs, made by Dianne Guise, the endorsed Labor candidate for the new seat of Joondalup. It is ironic that Dianne Guise, a Labor person, as a representative of the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations Joondalup District Council, worked with and supported me in my efforts to overcome the terrible legacy of the previous Labor Government with regard to these education needs. I have no doubt that should she be elected to Parliament, she will serve the community with positive distinction. With the support of Howard and Dianne, and also the support of my electorate officer, Terry Darby-Smith, as President of the Joondalup Primary School Parents and Citizens' Association, we have been able to achieve positive results in education needs for the electorate.

However, we still cannot relax. The previous Labor Government's delay in providing adequate high school facilities has left the electorate in a difficult position. It needs the Kinross high school. It appears there will be many temporary buildings on the site of Clarkson High School, and I have been informed that the Ballajura site will have between 30 and 40 transportable buildings. We certainly do not want that to happen at Clarkson.

There is a perception by residents in the area that the Kinross high school will be established. That advice was given to constituents at meetings in my office, and a map was provided showing the proposed schools for the area. Without the assurance of the Minister on this matter, I cannot give a solid commitment that the school will be built. I caution the Government about the consequences of a situation such as the Clarkson High School scenario. I remind the Minister and the Government that providing good educational resources is the first step towards providing our young people with the necessities for a good job and career and, hence, a rewarding life. To continue the coalition Government's record of good, responsible management, I urge the Minister to be proactive and not reactive or neglectful as was the previous Labor Government. I ask that a commitment be made to construct the Kinross high school in 1999.

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe - Minister for Education) [5.20 pm]: I thank the member for Wanneroo for his grievance. What he has said is true. There is no doubt that population growth in the northern suburbs and in areas such as Ballajura has been very great, and it is difficult to be precise about the number of students who will go through the primary schools initially; we can be more certain about the number who will go through the secondary schools because they are already in the system. I was surprised - I know the member for Wanneroo would not be surprised - to find when I opened Merriwa Primary School earlier this year that it already had 600 students. Similar circumstances apply in Ballajura and many other areas in the northern suburbs.

It is true that at Ocean Reef Senior High School, enrolments grew very strongly. In 1993, there were 1 200 students at that school; by 1995, that number had increased to 1 430. Clarkson High School opened this year, as was explained, in temporary facilities on the site of Craigie Senior High School. Clarkson has 208 students in year 8, and at the beginning of next year those students will move to the permanent site of Clarkson High School. As a number of members will be aware, there have been some construction problems on the site of that school, with some compacting of the foundation work and the like. That has been corrected and every effort is being made to ensure that that school is complete for the beginning of the next school year. I think we will achieve that, although there may be some disruption over the coming weeks.

Clarkson will be in full swing from the beginning of next year. It is estimated that by 1999 Ocean Reef Senior High School will have stabilised at around 1 250 students and Clarkson High School will have between 1 100 and 1 200 students. That does not make those schools large. In fact, it is not a bad size for a senior high school, given the trends in curriculum.

Mr Kobelke: What about quality of education?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I will come back to that. It is believed that by 1999, both Clarkson and Ocean Reef High Schools will have some temporary classrooms, but they will be small in number and not unacceptable. The Education

Department has identified and earmarked a site for Kinross Senior High School, but it has not yet acquired that site. On the current estimates of numbers at both Clarkson and Ocean Reef, it is not proposed at this stage to build a high school at Kinross. The only way we could achieve viable numbers in Kinross would be to change the borders for Belridge and Ocean Reef Senior High Schools. We could always have an argument about how big a high school should be. However, secondary education is in the process of quite dramatic transformation, and the change that took place in Geraldton with the emergence of a senior college for years 11 and 12 and specialist middle school campuses will probably be replicated in the coming year in Albany, and we will see it in regional parts of the metropolitan area. We should do a bit more lateral thinking. The short answer with respect to Kinross is that the site has been earmarked but not purchased. The situation will be monitored from year to year; and, if that school is needed, that decision will be made at that time. However, from the best estimates available, we think both Ocean Reef and Clarkson High Schools will cope adequately with the numbers. If something unusual happens - if development is accelerated or new developments come on stream - that will need to be reviewed and we will keep a watching brief on it. I believe the Education Department has it right; we can have those sorts of numbers in high schools without any detrimental effect.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Johnson): Grievances noted.

MOTION - SCHOOL STARTING AGE

MR KOBELKE (Nollamara) [5.22 pm]: I move -

That this House is concerned that statements by the Minister for Education comparing school starting ages across the Australian States are factually wrong and requests the Minister -

- (a) to circulate a well researched discussion paper on school starting age and the structure of schooling in Western Australia to properly inform parents, schools and the wider community on all the issues involved and to promote informed public debate; and
- (b) to undertake a formal and wide ranging consultative process to ensure that public concerns are fully considered prior to the Government deciding on any change to the school starting age.

Western Australia has an excellent education system and schools of a very high standard, but unfortunately we have gone backwards in the life of this Government. It is good to see that under the current Minister - I am not sure whether he will claim the credit - there has been a bit of a reversal of the trend for a drop in standards. It is important to involve parents in the important decisions that are made about the education of their children. Parents and educators are keenly interested in what happens in our schools. They are also experienced in knowing what will benefit their children and when their children have problems. We also have among those parents and educators the expertise to improve our system, rather than let it continue to slip downhill.

The Minister has been factually wrong in what he has been saying about school starting ages. I hope he will not take this personally. He has picked up a program that was already in train. He has been given information by a small group and by one sector of the Education Department, and those people have, regrettably, misinformed him. I hope that after this rational debate, the Minister will see that he cannot continue to say what he has been saying and that we must ensure that people have a better understanding of this quite complex issue, because what the Minister has put out, including his letter, which I will come to later, is quite misleading, and in some cases factually wrong.

I will take one simple statement that the Minister has made, and he made it again when he opened the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations' conference at the weekend. He said that children in Western Australia start their schooling at an earlier age than in the other States of Australia. That is not correct. Children in Western Australia generally start their schooling older than they do in most other States. That sort of mistake would not be made if the Minister had set out on a proper process of consultation and had involved parents by seeking their advice; he would have been better informed, and not by just one narrow group which clearly has it wrong.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Kids in this State are generally six to 12 months younger than kids in other States when they start school.

Mr KOBELKE: The Minister should listen to my case, and hopefully he will see that he is factually wrong. I am happy to take interjections when they are part of a rational debate, but when I am trying to lay out a detailed argument for the Minister, they do not help. I will answer questions when I have given the Minister the facts. I will start with a simple case, and, unfortunately, it is not uncommon for this sort of thing to happen. A gentleman came to my office about three weeks ago who had moved to Dianella, part of my electorate, from Sydney. He and his wife had come to Australia a few years ago and had worked in Sydney as professional engineers. His English was excellent. They have a 14 year old daughter and a son who turned five in the first half of this year. They were very happily settled in New South Wales, but their daughter had some ongoing and reasonably serious health problems, and they received medical advice that she would do much better in a different climate, so in her interests only, they gave away their jobs in Sydney, moved their family to Perth, and bought a house near Mirrabooka High and Primary Schools. He told me they paid above market value for that house because they wanted their daughter to be able to take their five year

old son to school and home again, as they both hoped to go into full time employment. They have no relatives in Perth, and they have yet to make any real friends on whom they can rely for help; therefore the schooling arrangements were crucial to that family.

They enrolled their daughter at Mirrabooka High School, and they rolled up at Mirrabooka Primary School and said that they would like to enrol their son. They were told that they could not. He does not turn six until the start of next year. He was in full time school in New South Wales. He had books and programs that were leading him to read and write. These people came to Western Australia only to find that their child was too young to get into school here. Of course, there is a program for five-year-olds that is run over four days a week. It is not universal. In Mirrabooka all the places are full, so there is no available place for him. He could perhaps have gone to another suburb but, without family support, these people cannot do that. They cannot get their son into formal, full time schooling in Western Australia, although he had started school in New South Wales. That is a clear example.

If he talks to anyone who has moved interstate, the Minister will get numerous examples to show that in Western Australia children start their schooling older than those in most of the rest of Australia. Queensland is similar to Western Australia. Children in the rest of Australia start formal schooling at an earlier age than they do in Western Australia. When the Minister says that our children start schooling earlier than those in the rest of Australia, he is factually wrong. He can talk to any of the journalists who have lived in other States or to people in this House who have lived in New South Wales or Victoria and ask what happened with their children's schooling. The children in this State start schooling later than those in most of the rest of Australia. Our children start later, not at an earlier age.

Mr C.J. Barnett: They are five to 12 months younger. Are you suggesting that you know more about this issue than the director general of education in this State and the directors general in other States of Australia?

Mr KOBELKE: No, the Minister has it wrong. I will go through the facts. I will give him the evidence. I have given an anecdotal case.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You stand isolated on this. You are so far out of touch.

Mr KOBELKE: I will outline the information. Before doing so, I remind the Minister of what he said in question time today. He took issue with Hon Alannah MacTiernan because in an advertisement she said, "Under the Court Government plan, children with birthdays from July to September cannot start school until they are seven". What is correct is that they cannot start school until the year they are seven.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Well why didn't she say that?

Mr KOBELKE: The letter she sent to these people contained the correct information.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Even that is not correct.

Mr KOBELKE: That is perfectly correct.

Mr C.J. Barnett: What happens if a child turns six in May? You are still wrong, you dill. You still have it wrong.

Mr KOBELKE: The Minister did not listen to the question. I ask him to listen to the question. I asked whether, under the Government's proposal, children whose birthdays are in the second half of the year would start school in the year they turn seven. I am saying that the Minister took issue because in one section, where a sentence was condensed to fit it into an advertisement, he found a situation where the information was not factually correct.

Mr C.J. Barnett: There is a space in the ad. Some words are missing.

Mr KOBELKE: I am agreeing with the Minister. He should open his ears and listen to what I am saying. I am hoping the Minister will listen to the debate and I will take his interjections. I just said that the advertisement he attacked in question time is factually wrong. The Minister said, "No it's not; you're wrong, you're wrong, you're wrong".

Mr C.J. Barnett: Well it is wrong.

Mr KOBELKE: I said that the advertisement placed by Hon Alannah MacTiernan is factually wrong, and the Minister disagreed with me. I hope he will now listen.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Will Hon Alannah MacTiernan now apologise to the people she misinformed? I will bet she won't. She won't have the courage to do that. She won't; she will perpetuate the lie.

Mr KOBELKE: The Minister should open his ears and listen. I hoped we might have a rational debate on such an important issue. I really do not want any interjections. I want to see whether I can get the Minister to answer some questions; whether we can get some sense out of the Minister who is normally quite a rational person.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan issued an advertisement and a small detail was factually wrong. She wrote to the people who requested it and gave them the detail which I have had from her and which is factually correct. In placing it in

the advertisement, the words were changed slightly and the advertisement was not correct. I am happy to accept that. Hon Alannah MacTiernan is happy to apologise for that. Is the Minister willing to make an apology for his letter that is full of inaccuracies? He has the whole of the Education Department to draft letters for him, and he gets it wrong. He is on very thin ice when he takes issue with Hon Alannah MacTiernan over one, small error. I accept that it is an error. The Minister is regularly making statements -

Mr C.J. Barnett: It is not a small error. It is the whole point in the ad.

Mr KOBELKE: I will now go to the evidence. I ask the Minister to listen so that we might have a rational debate, and I will be happy if he wants to take issue with the facts. In Western Australia year one is the first year of full time schooling. In most of the rest of Australia year one is the second year of full time education. One of the authorities I will cite is a Senate inquiry, which in early July this year published a report entitled "Childhood Matters: The Report on the Inquiry into Early Childhood Education" and which, in part, states -

Western Australia's minimum age of entry to school is most closely aligned with the second year of schooling in most States and Territories. This confusion appears to be the basis for Western Australia's original plan (under Good Start) to change progressively the cut-off date from the 31st December to the 30th April to bring that State fully in line with States like Victoria and the Northern Territory and closer to all the other States.

Such a change would have brought WA in line with the date in terms of day of the month but not in terms of age of entry. If the change is eventually implemented, children in Western Australia would begin their first year of school at the age their contemporaries in most States and Territories begin their second year of schooling.

Mr C.J. Barnett: How do you relate that to what I said at question time, that the school starting age across Australia is six?

Mr KOBELKE: I will lay out the case because it is a complicated issue. I accept that the Minister has been confused by people who have not presented him with the full picture. Hon Norman Moore initiated this scheme. It was on the shelf. The Minister was given it to carry and he did not realise what he had. It will become a can of worms if he continues to go around saying things that are factually incorrect. I ask the attendants to pass the graph I will speak about to the Minister. I also seek leave to have it incorporated in *Hansard*.

[The material in appendix A was incorporated by leave of the House.]

[See page 4789.]

Mr KOBELKE: This table comes from the Senate report on childhood matters. Other members might wish to have a copy to look at. This table is not simply photocopied from the report. I have adapted it in that the report contained three different tables, and I have tried to condense all the information into one table. I have double-checked it, so I am confident there is no error. If there is, I will accept responsibility for it. This table shows that every State has seven years of primary schooling. The first year of primary school in New South Wales is kindergarten. Children start kindergarten if they turn five years of age by 31 July.

Mr C.J. Barnett: How many years of secondary education do the other States have?

Mr KOBELKE: They have six.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You are playing with mirrors and you will get a parallel result. You will get a reflection of one on the other.

Mr KOBELKE: No, that is not so. The Minister is wrong. That is one of the key points in my argument to show that I am right and the Minister is wrong. I will quickly go through this table. It shows that in New South Wales the first year of school is kindergarten. In the Minister's document, to which I will refer in a moment, he says that it is compulsory. The Minister has been caught out by his own words. I repeat: In the table he has put out, he says that kindergarten in New South Wales is compulsory. The Minister's table shows that kindergarten in New South Wales is compulsory and that students start school when they are five on or before 31 July - they are five, not six years old.

Mr C.J. Barnett: It is kindergarten.

Mr KOBELKE: But that is the first year of schooling. In the Minister's own paper he says that it is compulsory schooling.

Several members interjected.

Mr KOBELKE: If one looks at Victoria -

Mr C.J. Barnett: Is it school or kindergarten?

Mr KOBELKE: It is schooling.

Mr C.J. Barnett: It is kindergarten. That is the name they use; they all call it kindergarten.

Mr KOBELKE: The Minister is playing with words. He should ask anyone living in New South Wales with children at school. It is full time; it is not like preprimary, which is four days a week. It is universally available; the Government pays for any child anywhere in the State, within reason, to attend kindergarten if their parents want them to. They start to learn to read and write then. Our children do that in year one. Our year one and their kindergarten are not synonymous. They start their formal reading and writing in kindergarten -

Mr C.J. Barnett: Is it compulsory.

Mr KOBELKE: According to the Minister's document it is compulsory.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You are saying that it is not.

Mr KOBELKE: No. The Minister has said that it is, so I am accepting that. It is schooling; it is conducted on the same site as normal school. The children attend and say that they are going to school. Everyone calls it school except the Minister and a few of his advisers.

In Victoria, the first year of schooling is called "preparatory". Children start that if they are five by 30 April. It is not compulsory, but nearly every child in that age group attends. If they do not attend and their parents enrol them in the first compulsory year - year one - then they are behind the eight ball. They have not done the program leading into the first year. Therefore, the first year of schooling in Victoria is called preparatory. The first year of schooling in the Australian Capital Territory is called kindergarten.

The Minister is playing with mirrors if he tries to align year one across Australia and use that as the starting point, as he has done in some of his documents. If he wants to provide a table that makes some sense, he must compare like with like. The understanding that all ordinary, intelligent people would have is that children start school when they attend full time, when it is universally available and when they start to learn to read and write. It does not matter what one calls it: It is schooling.

At the MCEETYA conference a few weeks ago, the Minister agreed that there is confusion about the names used. He had drawn to his attention the fact that people are using different names to talk about the same things; it was causing a whole range of confusion. Yet the material the Minister provided prior to that and subsequently takes no account of that; it continues to distort the picture totally in order to give the false impression that our children start school earlier. They do not and parents know that.

I seek to have a table incorporated in *Hansard*. This material was forwarded to the Senate Committee on Childhood Matters by Hon Norman Moore when he was the Minister for Education.

[The material in appendix B was incorporated by leave of the House.]

[See page 4790.]

Mr KOBELKE: I suggest that the Minister does not go back to the source of the poor advice he has already used. In fact, it would be a good idea if he were to listen to the debate. The Minister is taking advice from people who want to skew the facts and provide misinformation, but that seems to be the way he wants to play it.

Hon Norman Moore provided this information to the senate select committee that brought down the report. I point out to the Minister that I am now addressing the subject of his interjection. I hope that he is listening and that he has a copy of the table.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I do.

Mr KOBELKE: I believe that is the previously tabled document. I have moved on from that.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I certainly have not.

Mr KOBELKE: One column of this table shows the minimum entry age for school and the years of schooling. I note that the ACT has 13 years of schooling. How does it get that? It gets it by having six years of secondary schooling and seven years of primary schooling. One gets seven years of primary schooling only by counting kindergarten. So the Minister is counting kindergarten. Victoria has 13 years of schooling, because it has six secondary years and seven primary years. One can get seven primary years only by counting preparatory as the first year of schooling. New South Wales has 13 years of schooling - six secondary and seven primary. One can get seven primary years only by counting kindergarten as the first year of school. In Western Australia we have 12 years of schooling, because we have seven primary years and five secondary years. The Minister's predecessor acknowledged that the first year of schooling in most of the other States is not called year one. It is there in his own document and it does not require a great deal of interpretation to be able to see that.

I refer now to the document that the Minister attached to his letter of 1 August 1996 and I seek leave to have it incorporated in *Hansard*.

[The material in appendix C was incorporated by leave of the House.]

[See page 4791.]

Mr KOBELKE: This document from the Minister shows year one aligned across Australia. However, the table does not compare like with like. The Minister is comparing our preprimary, which is a part time program not universally available, with a full time, compulsory, universally available program in New South Wales. The Minister has tried to skew the whole thing in a way that is deceptive. I do not say that the Minister has done that personally; he has many responsibilities. He has been given that information and it has not been presented in an even and balanced way - it distorts the truth. What the Minister has been saying has been quite deceptive. I do not accuse the Minister of that personally; he has simply been caught up in it. This area is complex, otherwise clearly the Minister would not have been deceived - he is a very intelligent man and this is not something that happened easily.

I am thankful that the senate committee report came down at the very time the Minister raised the issue, otherwise I would not have got to the bottom of the situation across Australia. However, with the aid of that report and as a result of talking to many parents I have a moderately good understanding of the education systems across Australia.

Clearly, the children of Western Australia are older than those in other States when they start school. Let us define school in the normal way that it is accepted by everyone; that is, as full time, universally available education where children learn to read and write. That means that our children start school later than those in other States. The Minister's table has distorted that situation. I will not go into further details now because it is very complicated.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Your position as the Opposition education spokesman is that when children start primary school in this State they are typically older, not younger, than those elsewhere in Australia.

Mr KOBELKE: That is correct.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Is that the position of the Australian Labor Party?

Mr KOBELKE: I will come to the Labor Party's position.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I want to be clear on this: Is that the basis of your position on preprimary, primary and secondary education going into the election?

Mr KOBELKE: The Labor Party's position will be based on the facts.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Will you stake your credibility as the Labor Party spokesman on Education on that?

Mr KOBELKE: I am outlining the facts for the Minister. If he thinks I am wrong, I will suggest one other source he can go to on childhood matters: He should look at the data relevant to children one year and two years before attending school. He will then find that his table makes no sense. The facts are there, but they have been pushed out of alignment to try to create a false image. If the Minister is to make any sensible comparison of the available statistics, he must compare this State's year one program with kindergarten in New South Wales and the ACT and preparatory in Victoria. South Australia is a more complicated case.

Mr Day: What about the children? Is that an issue?

Mr KOBELKE: Absolutely.

Having established the facts about the proposed changes to the school starting age, I advise the Minister that what he is proposing is the worst kind of adhocery. He has moved on one element of the schooling system without taking account of the complexities of the whole system. It could have dire consequences for the quality of education in our schools. If the starting age is moved back, pressure will be brought to bear on the Government to make preprimary the first year of school. In fact, Diane Kerr, a lady whom I respect, said at a public meeting I attended last week that it was her view - it is not government policy - that preprimary will become a full time, five days a week program. This would commit the Government to millions of dollars. I do not know whether this Government, or any Government, would give that priority when it comes to dishing out the dollars, and that is what I mean by adhocery. The Government is making a change without thinking through the consequences for the rest of the system.

Mr C.J. Barnett: "Full time" is a confusing term. A four day full time program will be universally available from the beginning of 1998 - 80 per cent of children at the beginning of next year, and 60 per cent now. That is what will be in place. It has been costed and funded, and will be implemented by the coalition Government.

Mr KOBELKE: I was actually trying to help the Minister and I suggest he does not dig a deeper hole for himself. What he said is politically anathema in the community. He suggests that parents can put their children into preprimary for four days a week and it will be considered full time. What do the five year olds do on the other day? Do they run the street? It is absolute nonsense. A large percentage of Western Australian families are single parent

families and, in many two parent families, both parents are working. It is absolute nonsense to say that full time is four days a week. If the Minister told that to concerned parents, they would laugh at him. As I said, this is the worst form of adhocery.

The Minister is jiggling the system without thinking through the consequences for the education system. If the school starting age is increased, a whole lot of pressures will be placed on the education system. I am not saying that changes should not have been made; I am saying that there should be a rational debate to ascertain whether the existing system should be changed, whether the outcome of the proposed changes would be advantageous and whether priority should be given to funding the changes. The funding consequences could be enormous. It is no good saying that we can patch up the system later by throwing \$1m at it here and there. Once the system has been rejigged, it could cost hundreds of millions of dollars to return it to its original state. We must do away with this adhocery and plan on the basis of improving the education system with the funds that are available.

It is not appropriate to say that when children are clamouring to learn how to read and write, the Government will increase the program from four to five days a week. It would cost 30 per cent more to go from four to five days because time must be allowed for duties other than teaching time and the fact that the preprimary program would be universally available. It will not stop there because the Government will be confronted with what it should do when children are subjected to eight years of primary education and five years of secondary education. The year 7 children could possibly be moved into high school and that would cost hundreds of millions of dollars. I am not saying that the Government should do that, but should we set up a sequence of events that will incur huge expenditure without first working through the advantages that would be gained from making that change? Educational planning and educational outcomes will not be improved with that sort of adhocery.

Under the Government's proposal would consideration be given to establishing campuses for senior students? Perhaps it is a good idea, but it should be debated in a rational way. Under the proposal many of the students in their final year of high school will be 18 years of age and it may not be appropriate to have them in the high school system.

Mr C.J. Barnett: The common form will be for most of them to be in senior colleges.

Mr KOBELKE: In other words, the senior colleges will be universally available? Is that a commitment by this Minister?

Mr C.J. Barnett: I said it will be the common form. A senior college may not be available in every area, but the vast majority of children will attend senior colleges.

Mr KOBELKE: I implore the Minister to move away from this adhocery.

Mr C.J. Barnett: The member asked me a question to which I gave the answer and he did not like it.

Mr KOBELKE: The Minister did not provide the answer. What about the problems of moving from one school to another, when some areas will have senior colleges and others will not? A range of organisational issues must be addressed if the education system is to be improved. The Minister is proposing to rejig the system to save money. He has not thought through the whole process. I reiterate that we should have a rational debate to determine whether it is the right way to go.

Mrs Parker interjected.

Mr KOBELKE: The member should know about the Ballajura college. The year 7 children were put into high school. It has consequences which the Government may not have thought through.

Mrs Parker: It has thought them through.

Mr KOBELKE: If the Government has thought it through in the same way as it has thought through the school starting age, there will be some difficulty. I indicated why I believe the Minister's proposal is wrong and I have referred to the consequences of this ad hoc planning in education. I implore the Minister to listen to the arguments and to put the whole process on a more formal footing.

I advise the Minister that it is no good sending out letters which contain incorrect facts; it only misleads people. Like the New South Wales Government, this Government should be putting together a discussion paper. It should issue the discussion paper to allow for informed public debate. The Government should not simply say that people should write to it on the basis of the misinformation they have been given. It is totally inadequate. A discussion paper outlining the issues should be prepared and the feedback from public discussions will allow the Government to make an informed decision. The quality of education will then be improved and the Government can also determine what it will cost the State to make the changes. A judgment can then be made about whether approval should be given to funding the changes. If that approach is adopted, we will be dealing with education in a rational way.

I have not referred to appropriate educational programs, which are very important. I have tried to emphasise that it is no good simply changing the school starting age. Consideration must be given to what is the appropriate starting

age. One of the arguments which has been used is that children whose birthdays fall in the latter part of the year are disadvantaged. That is a misleading statement because the research does not indicate that.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.30 pm

Mr KOBELKE: As I was drawing my remarks to a conclusion, and with the number of interjections made during my final comments, I perhaps said things that were not correct. I will correct what I was saying about the research data relating to the school starting age. That data suggested that children who were the younger members of the cohort did better than those in the cohort who were older. Some evidence exists for that; however, it is mixed. The point I was making that is totally false is that one cannot then say that shifting the starting age will address that, because the matters are totally unrelated. Whatever the starting point for an annual group, some children will be one day short of being one year older than other children. Moving the starting age will not address the problem of having a range of ages and, therefore, possibly a range of aptitude and preparedness to engage in formal education. If we wished to address the issue of a wide range of ages of up to a year's difference, we would have to do something like South Australia, which has multiple intakes, and that is not what is being suggested here.

In conclusion I have laid out the facts to show that the Minister has made statements which are factually incorrect. We hope this area can be one of rational debate in the community. Therefore, we need a discussion paper which presents the details in an objective and factual way. That is not the current situation. The Minister is sending out letters suggesting people respond to information that is biased and slanted. That is not the sort of information on which to base a rational debate.

MR LEAHY (Northern Rivers) [7.33 pm]: In formally seconding the motion I will point out a few issues that affect country students. Like my colleague the member for Nollamara, I am not criticising the Minister or the education system, because the public has been well served by the education system. I am a product of the state school system as are my four children. Many people who go through the system thank their teachers and school for their education. I do not wish to be critical of evolution or improvement in education. We must constantly monitor and improve the system where necessary. We should apply the adage, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it". The school starting age is not something we need change in Western Australia. For all the reasons which were pointed out by my colleague, the starting age is about right.

A large proportion of our Aboriginal people resides in the country. It has been shown through a number of studies that Aboriginal children are quick learners at a young age. I do not know the reason and nor do educators; however, it is a fact that Aboriginal children learn quickly in the education system at an early age. They attend school when they are first introduced to it. The best turnout of Aboriginal children in the school system is in kindergarten at five or six years of age. For whatever reason or distraction, the older they get the more likely Aboriginal children are to truant. Sometimes that is because their parents are moving about. If we are to push back the formal age for education and, therefore, push back the age at which those children will be entering high school - in the year they turn 14 instead of 13 - we will introduce a whole new concept for these children. The likelihood of their participating right through the primary years and into the secondary years is remote. There are a number of distractions for Aboriginal children; however, it is also a fact that many people in this State do not see the relevance of education. That is unfortunate. That normally occurs in the lower socioeconomic structure, because many of those people are unemployed and sometimes their parents were unemployed. In that situation, they do not see the education system fitting them out for employment.

I am worried about that, and the impact of the cutback in federal funding on training programs in country Western Australia, especially in the SkillShare program and community development programs for Aboriginal people. I urge the Minister to have a good look at this issue. The advice he has received is that the system should change; it is wrong for the reasons outlined by the member for Nollamara and me.

The system as it stands is that children start their formal education in the year that they turn six. They continue for seven years in primary school. In the Eastern States children attend school the same year they turn six. Sometimes the first year at school is called kindergarten, and sometimes preparatory school. It might be under a different name, but invariably - as it is in Western Australia - the child turns six in the first year of formal education. They have the opportunity wherever they reside to go to school on a full time basis. That does not occur in Western Australia at the moment. Many locations in this State, including my electorate, do not have preschool education available and I do not know when it will be available.

Mr C.J. Barnett: For any reasonable population of students - I recognise the small population in your area - a preprimary year should be available by the beginning of 1998. If the member for Northern Rivers believes preprimary education will not be available in any area, I would appreciate his telling me.

Mr LEAHY: The most disadvantaged children in the education system in this State are country children. Any study will show that their TEE scores are about 20 points lower on average than those of city kids. They are no brighter and no thicker than city kids. On average they are just as bright but they do not attain, for a number of reasons,

including difficulty attracting higher qualified teachers to country areas, retaining those teachers, continuity, etc. I am concerned that this will be one more impediment to country kids achieving the TEE scores they need to go on to university, especially when the number of university places is shrinking. I have no doubt that the TEE scores for university entrance will increase. There will be more paid places in universities, which will mean fewer unpaid places. The scores required to go on to university without doubt will be higher than they are now. At present there is an under-representation in universities in Australia, not just Western Australia, of country based kids.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I know your comments are sincere; however, if children are slightly older than they are now when they start school, they will have a far better chance of gaining basic literacy skills at an early age and hence a far greater chance statistically of completing and succeeding in education. Aboriginal kids are a special case, I agree.

Mr LEAHY: That is right, and we have no way of addressing that problem of Aboriginal kids who are the most disadvantaged of the disadvantaged country children. The retention rate for Aboriginal kids through to year 12 is something like 5 per cent as against 70 per cent for the rest of the population. The chances of their going on to university are almost nil. Invariably Aboriginal people who go on to university succeed, but they start university at a mature age. Almost without exception they do not go on to university from year 12. The present system where children at age six have the opportunity of going to year 1 is a far better option especially for country children. I would like to see that continue.

I listened to the news on the way back from the dinner suspension and heard the Director General of Education say that a survey will be sent out. I know that in my electorate, mothers particularly and fathers - for whatever reason mothers tend to take far greater interest in their children's education - overwhelmingly support the present age for their children attending school. I have not heard one person - obviously there are some, especially educators - support the change. I hope the full information will be placed before them and that, for whatever reason, they are not provided with misinformation. To tell people that we will be adopting a system that is uniform around Australia would be misinformation. The system is not uniform, for the reasons the member for Nollamara has pointed out and to which I have alluded. The school entry age throughout Australia is close to uniform now.

We will not be adopting a situation that is uniform; it will be the reverse. We will make the children in this State start their first year of formal education one year later than they do now and that is wrong.

MRS van de KLASHORST (Swan Hills) [7.42 pm]: I have a background of being junior primary trained at college, teaching for 15 years every grade to year 7, having a postgraduate degree in reading, including remedial reading, and being a mother and potential grandmother of twins due at Christmas. I have a reasonable amount of experience with early childhood education.

One of my major thrusts as an educator is that we must put money into the beginning of children's education. I have always advocated that that should be when we spend the most money. Once a problem has arisen or something has been learnt, if it has been learnt wrongly the next stage is to unlearn it. If we are aware of children's problems early, we will have time to solve them. The positive changes that our Government has put in place in the four year old and five year old education programs is the start of something which will become a positive step for Western Australia inasmuch as the education system will at last not only catch up with the twentieth century but also move into the twenty-first century.

We must start at the beginning. We must remember - I think some of the opposition speakers tonight have forgotten - that there are many types of education; but for this debate there are two types of education - informal and formal. Informal education starts almost before a child is born. Children learn from copying, role modelling and from situations where they must take part in activities.

The SPEAKER: Order! The level of conversation in the Chamber is too high. I urge members to desist from that so that Hansard is able to hear without straining and so that we can all listen to the member on her feet.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: Informal education starts even perhaps before birth when a child learns within the womb to have its needs met by suckling, breathing, feeding itself and all the other things the foetus does. Post-birth the child has movement, watches people, sees a familiar face and gradually learns to recognise that familiar face.

Informal education must occur before formal education. This is where the Opposition is mixed up. We are talking about different types of education and schooling. We are talking about children in Western Australia having the opportunity to have, I suppose one would say, semistructured informal education as four year olds, two days a week followed by a slightly more structured program as five year olds when they go into the school system. It is important to understand why we are doing this. We must realise that there are two areas of early education, the first of which is early assessment followed by early intervention. I have taught for many years knowing that a problem caught at year 7 would have been a minuscule problem had it been discovered at year 1, preprimary or even kindergarten. At year 7 it could be a major problem matched by behavioural problems.

It is important for every member in the House to know that children cannot learn formal education without being orally competent. To do that they must develop skills of the spoken word. From when I did my degree in reading education I remember that we learn the spoken word by mimicking, by being in situations where speech is essential, by role modelling parents and from generally being in the home. From the time the child is born, if it is subjected to many of these stimuli it will gradually acquire language. Children acquire language at the rate they are ready, based on their degree of cognitive skills. Those skills are dependent on the level of teeth, tongue and brain - physical and mental - development. One of the most important phases for young children is the social aspect of their cognitive development. A child starts learning how to speak by copying mum and dad in their various roles.

One of the problems which has developed over 20 years, and which is evident in the community today, is that television is being used as medium of communication for people. Some children interact more now with the television and computer screens than with other children. It has been noticed by our schools and I have been observing this issue for some time. As a result children's oral skills are diminishing. Children in the community are talking less compared to the amount of television they watch. Television is a non-interactive medium and is posing problems to the school system. That does not have a lot to do with early education, but I wanted to make that point because it is important.

Mr Ripper: Perhaps it does have a lot to do with it. If you delay entry to school, don't you exacerbate that problem?

Mr Day interjected.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: They start even before then; they start from the moment they are born. We must remember that they are learning all the time. As members of Parliament we are learning every day. Children have two, three or four years at home, and during that time they are learning every day by role modelling and from all the things that happen to them. It behoves parents to ensure that their children are subjected to a range of stimuli in order to develop their cognitive and social skills, and also to learn to speak. We must provide a transition from that home environment, where children learn naturally, to school. Parents do not say A,B,C and their children learn A,B,C; children learn by listening to their parents talk. Young children point to a glass when they want water because they have seen their mum and dad fill a glass with water, and gradually they get to the stage where they can ask for water. Sometimes they cannot pronounce the words, but they start with sounds, and those sounds turn into words gradually. Children copy the language stimuli around them.

We must remember that children go into the education system at three or four years of age, and worldwide research has demonstrated that it is not beneficial to put those children straight into formal education. The early childhood educative programs are based on some fairly significant factors. Firstly, the staff have specific training in how to handle the cognitive and social development of young children and how to provide the right environment for them. It behoves all Governments to ensure that early childhood education is treated as a specialist field and is given the recognition that it deserves. People often imply that to be a high school teacher is more important than to be a primary or preprimary teacher. That is not so, because the way children start is the way children will finish. Children who start with a well trained teacher will have a solid foundation for the future. We all know that buildings need a solid foundation. If we scrimp on the foundation of a house, we will end up with a house that has cracks in it. The more resources we put into early childhood education, the better will be the children as they move through school.

Children also need appropriate buildings, with large spaces. This is where formal and informal education come into play. Young children generally come from homes with two or three bedrooms, a lounge room, a dining room, a kitchen and somewhere to play. They need space in which to move around and develop their skills. However, if we suddenly move them into a classroom where they sit behind a desk in a formal situation, before they are ready for it, we will limit the development of their social, cognitive and psychological skills.

Children learn primarily through play. A well structured kindergarten or preprimary area allows for a wide variety of play. Children actually work at their play. They take their play very seriously. Any members who have gone to kindergarten, preschool or early childhood areas will have seen the boys and girls dress up in front of a mirror. We might say they are just playing, but they are finding out about themselves, they are learning to take their clothes off and put them on, they are interacting and communicating with other children, and they are role modelling. The girls will play mum and the boys will play dad, and then they may pretend to be grandmother or the teacher, or someone on television. They are building their skills through play, but they need to have lots of space and they need to have materials which motivate them to play in that way.

In order to understand maths, children need to learn concepts of space, size and shape. They do not know those things automatically; they learn them. In a preschool or preprimary school, the teacher may cook pikelets or chocolate crackles. The teacher will take nine cups of flour, two eggs, and other ingredients, put them in a mixing bowl, and the children will learn about spatial concepts. They also learn to recognise different words, because a good teacher will structure new words into teaching situations, at the children's level, which allows the children to extend their vocabulary, which is what we are all aiming for, while at the same time they are extending their spatial and other concepts. The teacher and the children interact with each other, with other children, and with parents and other

people who come into the area. All the time they are doing this play, for which they get a reward, because they get the pikelets or chocolate crackles at the end of it, they are adding to their cognitive development.

Children also learn about maths through play. I have seen boys play for hours with large blocks where they build towers and knock them down, and build squares and drop balls in the squares. They are learning about spatial dimensions and how things fit together. That is the most effective form of training. We do not tell a four year old that if he builds a tower, he must put a triangular base on it or it will fall over. We tell him to work it out for himself. We all know that people learn by doing things. Every time children pick up a block, a pen or a piece of paper, or stir a pot, they are using their small manipulative muscles, and at the same time they are problem solving by deciding whether a block will fit into a certain hole, and they are learning about spatial dimension and how to handle materials. These are fabulous ways of getting the concepts of maths into their heads, in the way in which children learn naturally, which is through play. The advantage of these types of non-structured educative programs is that children can choose what they really want to do. We all know that anything that we really want to do, we do well. Preprimary education enables children to learn by doing what they like to do.

There are also some things that children need to be taught to do. A child with low self esteem who does not get a lot of help at home may not be able to use scissors to cut out pictures, or may not be able to paint. A well trained preprimary or kindergarten teacher can guide a child to do that, without any pressure, and without all of the children sitting in rows in a structured environment. A remediation is done where it is needed in the early childhood areas. A lot of people might identify with the example of children playing in a sandpit. Often they will see little boys with tip trucks and water being used. Water is one of the best learning properties. I remember from my college days that it enables children to learn conservation properties; that is, the quantities of water needed to fill different shaped containers. Children must be between seven and eight years of age to understand conservation properties. They cannot learn a certain set of maths until they understand that principle. They learn that the volume of a tall, rectangular container can equal that of a short, round container; or a square container can hold the same amount of water as a round one, even though they appear to be of different sizes. That cognitive test is given to children before they are moved on to a new learning situation. The children are practising those tests when they are playing with water in the sandpit. They will practise that for as long as they need in a completely non-structured situation. However, we must not think the preprimary and kindergarten areas are not structured. They are structured in a way that the teacher knows what each child is doing, but not in a formal sense where every child is being directed to do the same thing at the same time.

This is why emphasis needs to be placed on this type of education for our young people going into schools. Concrete learning is the basis of all learning. We find that out by hands-on experience. People who are farmers know they learn about sheep by working with them. People can read books about sheep farming forever, but unless they work with the sheep on a farm, they do not understand what is involved. It is the same as those we in Giddegannup call St George's Terrace farmers; farmers who sit in offices in that street writing calculations on a piece of paper. They say that a paddock measures five metres by 100 metres or 500 metres by 1 000 metres. If that area is planted with seeds, it will harvest a certain amount of wheat. Unfortunately life is not like that. The people in St George's Terrace can produce those figures based on computer modelling as much as they like, but they will find a different story when they go out to the farms and see a rocky outcrop on which wheat cannot be planted; that the weather was not right so that the seed was not planted at the time that was most beneficial; and that the cattle next door can lean across the fence and eat the wheat that is growing. People must have hands-on experience before they can do many things in life. In the preprimary and kindergarten sectors, people can get hands-on experience.

The Opposition was very concerned about the fact that children may, at the other end of education, come out with fewer skills because they have spent less time at school. In America children start later, during the year they turn seven. However, they obtain informal education before that. I do not know how many members watch television, but if they do they will probably have observed the same thing as I have. I have often said to my husband that American children are articulate; that they can cope very well.

Dr Constable: My children went to school in Boston and they started long before seven.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: There are always exceptions to every rule. The children and adults in America seem to be articulate. We should compare them with how our children, at the same level and at the same age, speak in public. Research shows that starting school later does not affect children in anything other than in a positive way. Children are being picked up at the level at which they are ready to learn.

Mr Ripper: What about all the research that shows that early intervention is positive?

Mrs van de KLASHORST: This is the wonderful thing about this program. The early intervention is being done, but in a non-structured situation.

Dr Constable: Research shows that a structured situation is best.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: That is not the research I read.

Mr Ripper: Do you have the document of that research for us?

Mrs van de KLASHORST: I know what I have learned and read. Children learn through a non-structured system. When children are at home there is no structured learning situation. In the first three or four years of their lives children are not in a structured situation; they learn by watching and doing.

Mr Thomas: What about the fact that children at home do not seem to have the same opportunity to interact with other children as others have? In my case, had my children not been sent off to the Montessori school at the age of three, there were no other children of the same age for them to interact with.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: It was the same with my children. No other children of their age lived nearby. We made sure we provided a learning situation at home for them. We were aware of the pitfalls, but many people are not. Children can go into preprimary school or kindergarten. They are getting this type of learning from trained teachers.

We need to remember two things: First, the early education that is being brought forward by the Minister is early assessment, followed by early intervention which can then be monitored as the child moves forward. I believe there must be much more public debate on this matter. We must make sure the public is aware of exactly what is happening and what we are doing. These days education involves parents.

During the suspension for dinner I visited Princess Margaret Hospital. I saw the mums constantly sitting with the children who are sick. The situation today is not the same as when I started teaching 18 or 19 years ago when parents were kept out of the school. Nowadays we invite parents into the school. They become partners with the teachers. To have the parents involved in early education is extremely important, firstly, so that the parents can watch their child develop and, secondly, so that the parents know what is happening to the child, so there is constant interaction between the parents and the teachers. We need to ensure the parents are aware from the beginning if there is a problem, or the child has some sort of a growth pattern that is below that of the others or is accelerating ahead of the others. In that way they can work hand in hand with the early childhood teachers in any required remediation programs.

Amendment to Motion

Mrs van de KLASHORST: We certainly need a wide ranging public debate on the whole issue. Therefore, I move -

To delete all words after "House" with a view to substituting the following words -

supports a wide-ranging public debate on the issue of school starting age and urges school communities, particularly parents and parent groups, educationalists, members of professional education bodies and peak organisations from the non-government education sector, to contribute to the debate by putting forward their views and comments on the proposal to change the school starting age cut-off date.

This House also supports a decision being made on any proposed change before the end of this year so that the implementation of a new school starting age cut-off date could occur in 2001 without affecting children born before the end of this year.

MR BRADSHAW (Wellington - Parliamentary Secretary) [8.10 pm]: I second the amendment. It is certainly important when such major changes are being made to the education system that public debate be taken into consideration. There should be a lot of community debate to ensure that people understand the situation. There are always differences of opinion, even between educationalists - some support these moves and some oppose them. Unfortunately, in these circumstances sometimes those who oppose such moves spread all sorts of mischief and misinformation and put the fear of God into the community. It is very important that people understand the changes that are proposed, and in the end the Government must take note of the public debate. It is always very hard to establish whether one has majority support in the community unless one undertakes a referendum. When changes of this kind are mooted, the community groups associated with the schools - such as WACSSO and the parents and friends associations at the private schools - certainly let the Government know whether they support the moves.

There is a wide variation in the level of achievement of children at the same age. Our education system needs enough flexibility to take into consideration those who are ahead of themselves for their age compared with the average and those who are slower than average. When I was in the equivalent of what is now year 4, I was not coping with school - I am a December child. Fortunately I had a teacher at North Perth Primary, Mrs Bartlett, who had the sense to suggest to my parents that I stay down a grade for a year. I did so and then started to cope with school. In those days classes were graded as A, B and C. Until fourth grade I was in C class.

Mrs Roberts: I thought that you went to CBC Leederville.

Mr BRADSHAW: I went to North Perth Primary School first, then to Perth Boys' School and then to CBC Highgate. Although for a few years after I was kept down I was reluctant to admit it, I believe I was fortunate in doing so. Many people feel badly about being kept down a year. Even today it occurs to me that perhaps I was a slow learner, and

some here might agree. There should be enough flexibility in the system so that those turning six late in the year do not start school until later.

With the preprimary school and early childhood education system that has been put in place - the informal arrangement - surely there will be a way of identifying those children who are more advanced and more mature so that they can be slotted in earlier if need be. It is surely up to the educationalists and teachers to say whether a child should start school earlier or later. This system will provide that flexibility. The brighter students will be able to go ahead and those who are not as mature can be held back. As I said, I had that difficulty myself, but a school friend of mine was a year ahead. There will always be the exceptional people. I remember reading last year about a 14 year old who was ready to go to university. However, we need horses for courses, and the children who are ready to go to school should go and those who are not should not.

We must also consider the other end of the system - when children leave school. We must ensure that they have received a reasonable education. Many students going through the system do not have the privilege that I had of being kept down a year. They struggle all the way through school and eventually leave because of their age. Not only have they had trouble coping with school but, because they have not had a good, basic education, they continue to have problems. It would be interesting to look at street kids to see whether they had trouble at school or whether their problems are attributable to their home environment. Is it the education system that is letting down those kids who are vandalising property? It is very important that we have a lengthy debate on this subject. I am sure that this debate will continue, because it is a very topical subject.

As a country member I am concerned about children travelling on school buses. Some students travel for an hour in the morning and an hour at night, and possibly even longer. These young children tend to fall asleep on the bus coming home; it is not good for them. They do not have an opportunity to sleep at school in the afternoon if they are tired.

Mrs van de Klashorst: My son was so young when he started school - he had a November birthday - that we had to pick him up from the bus and carry him to the car because he was fast asleep. He spent 45 minutes on the school bus. At times it was terribly hot. I really feel for the children in the country because they travel for a lot longer. Our children travelled for only 45 minutes through the bush at Gidgegannup. That is a major factor for young children in the bush.

Mr BRADSHAW: It is an important factor.

Many people are saying that children should not go to school at this age. I believe we should be looking at the other end of the system - when they are coming out and whether they are as educated as we would like them to be. That is also very important. I am also concerned about helping children with disabilities, and we should be putting much more effort into those students. Many children may have learning disabilities because they have attended school too early, and perhaps that should be reviewed. I support the amendment moved by the member for Swan Hills.

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe - Minister for Education) [8.19 pm]: This is an unusual debate. The issue of early childhood education and the school starting age of children is an important one and one which should not be rushed. The school starting age has been on the public agenda and discussed by the education community for the last 12 months. It is important that a decision is made on educational grounds. It is also important that the issue is resolved. People in the community telephone and write to me about this matter because they want to know what is happening. Politics should not come into this issue, but I recognise that we are heading towards an election and politics will come into it.

The issue, under the name of Good Start, related to the five year old program, the kindergarten program and the school starting age. I am sure members on this side of the House would concede that there was confusion in the public arena about this issue. However, it should not conceal the fundamental merit of an emphasis on resources into and teaching in early childhood education. Surely that is what it is all about. Since taking over the portfolio of Education I have been working through this issue and it is not an area in which I pretend to have any great expertise.

The position with the five year old program has been resolved. The member for Nollamara made the point that it is not full time education. I concede it is a four full days a week program.

Mrs Roberts: In other words, it is a part time program.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I suggest the member for Glendalough discuss this issue with some mothers. One of the aspects in education I am committed to is providing a choice. Ultimately, I would like to see more part time programs. Not all parents want their children of that age attending for even four days a week.

Mrs Roberts: I don't have to go out of my way to talk to young mothers. I talk to them every day.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The member for Glendalough will learn that when a serious issue is being debated in this House she must make serious comments.

Mr Ripper: Don't patronise her.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The member made a patronising comment about me and she got one back.

Members on this side of the House and school communities have discussed the issue of early childhood education. While there is some disagreement between members on this side of the House, as there should be, they are generally of the view that children in this State start school at a younger age than in other States. They believe that on educational grounds it would be better to have children entering into formal compulsory education later than is currently the case. At the meeting of federal and state Ministers of Education held in Brisbane in August this year discussion was held on the merits of trying to achieve standard terminology, because that is part of the confusion, and having as much commonality in the school starting age as is possible across Australia. It is similar to the problems encountered with the railway system at the start of the century. It was an historic achievement in Brisbane when the Ministers for Education agreed -

Mr Kobelke: You are no further advanced than you were in 1991.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: What will happen if the States and the Commonwealth decide to move towards a uniform starting age in the period May, June and July? It will be an important step. If members believe that the existing structure does not create any problems, I suggest they talk to people in the defence services and people who move interstate.

This issue has been debated by members on this side of the House for a year and we have formed the view that there should be a change to the school starting age and a mid-year cut-off. I was strongly supported by the federal Minister, Dr David Kemp, at the Brisbane meeting when I argued strongly and successfully for a move towards uniformity in Australia.

Mr Kobelke: Not with South Australia.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, but it is interesting that Mr Lucas, the South Australian Minister, has had another look at the issue and has made comments similar to those which were made in Brisbane.

Mr Kobelke: Is he willing to now conform to the majority view?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: He will not do anything silly like that because he is a very good Minister. South Australia has a continual entry system.

Mr Kobelke: They said they would not shift.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The position adopted by both South Australia and Tasmania is under review. They are willing to have another look at it. They are not being silly about it.

Mr Kobelke: Do you mean to say that they did not put a rider on the decision that they would not agree. They said that they wished to record their objection to the decision.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: And they did. Since then, South Australia has decided to reconsider its position. Discussion is taking place between the directors general of the States. The other State which was uneasy at the Brisbane meeting, because it had not considered the proposal properly, was Tasmania, and it is also reconsidering it. While the member for Nollamara is adopting a dogmatic view, I advise him that Education Ministers around the country are collectively looking at this issue and they have charged their directors general to research the issue and come up with common nomenclature to try to work towards uniformity. That is the reality.

Generally, members on this side of the House have decided that the school starting age should be changed. They would also like to go to a mid-year cut-off point and to see children in year 1 a little older and maturer, both intellectually and socially, so that they have a chance to succeed in education. The Government wants flexibility, but it will not be dogmatic about it. Members on this side of the House are continuing this debate by talking to school communities, education institutions, including universities, the Catholic Education Commission and the independent schools. Members opposite should also be part of the debate. The Opposition has tried to discredit the government position by relying on a table produced by Senator Crowley for a Senate inquiry.

Mr Kobelke: That is not true. It was produced by a Senate committee which had cross-party membership and it was fully supported.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The member for Nollamara's speech focused on this table. The member tabled this document and he circulated it with great pride.

Mrs Roberts: Tell the truth.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I should tell the truth! Would the member like a copy of Hon Alannah MacTiernan's advertisement? Talk about telling the truth!

The terminology used in the table includes reception years, preparatory years, kindergarten years and preschool years. Anyone involved in education would concede that the terminology is confusing. The only way I can explain the misunderstanding of the member for Nollamara is that there are eight columns across this table. It describes early childhood and primary school education in these eight columns. In Western Australia there are years 1 to 7 and with one preprimary school year and kindergarten, which makes nine years of education. Can members fit nine years into eight columns? They simply cannot put nine years of education in Western Australia into eight columns. That is the reason the table is wrong. This error was picked up by the Education Department and Hon Barbara Scott. Every other State fits into the eight columns.

Mr Kobelke: They have nine years.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The member for Nollamara got it wrong. Even more fundamental than the number of columns and the number of school years, is a basic difference of understanding. The advice given to members on this side of the House by all sectors of the education community is that all children starting school in this State are five to 12 months younger than their counterparts elsewhere in Australia, with the exception of Queensland. Members opposite believe that children in Western Australia are older compared with other States. I am willing to be judged on that. I might be wrong and members opposite might be wrong. Let the experts judge this issue. We should wait to see what the experts, academics and education authorities say. The Education Department and members on this side of the House think they are younger, but the member for Nollamara thinks they are older. If the member for Nollamara is wrong, the foundation of his education platform is flawed by one year in everything he does.

Mr Kobelke: Will you answer an interjection?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, I will not. When the member responds he can ask me any question he wants and I will answer it. Another example is a child born in November, as was the member for Wellington. Currently, a child born late in the year will be five through almost all of year 1. The same child will be aged four years through the preprimary year and three through the kindergarten year. We say that those kids are too young. They are not developed physically, socially or intellectually. This Government has put more resources into early childhood education. At the beginning of next year 80 per cent of all children in this State will have available the preprimary program for four full days.

Mr Kobelke: You are four years too late.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: What did the member's side do for 10 years? The member should not sit and chirp away. He did bugger all. We are getting on with it. We have put up the money. We have employed the teachers, built the classrooms and we have the kids in the classrooms doing the play programs, learning literacy skills and into education. At the beginning of 1998, 100 per cent of kids in this State will have four days of full time preprimary education. From 1999 on, every kid in this State will have two sessions of kindergarten and from 2000 on every kid progressively will be phased into four sessions of kindergarten. They will be aged three years if we do not change it.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan produced an advertisement which said that kids will not start school until they are aged seven years. That is sheer nonsense and shows a lack of understanding of the issue. Her ad stated that, under the Court Government plan, children with birthdays from July to December will not start school until they are seven. We have been told that the advertisement is wrong, but the reason for its being wrong is that she had to compress the information to fit it into the ad! That is the whole point of the ad! Half the line following the full stop is empty. She had space for the words. That was absolutely irresponsible. The fact is that, under this Government, kids will have more kindergarten and more preprimary. They will be getting better, more effective early childhood education and a better start to their education. If they have learning difficulties or other problems, they will be identified and dealt with. Those kids will have the best possible chance at education. We all know that if kids get a good start in their education, as the member opposite said, they will have more chance of completing primary school, gaining literacy skills, gaining secondary qualifications and going on to successful careers, training and further education. That is what this is all about. They will be less likely to get into trouble and will be better kids. We have made a huge commitment. I give credit to my predecessor in the portfolio, Hon Norman Moore. He ran into a lot of controversy on this issue. However, what he tried to do was absolutely spot on. Hon Barbara Scott, who drafted the Scott report, was also spot on. This is about education and about commitment to kids and we are delivering.

The other parts of the motion refer to consulting and so on. This issue has not popped up in the last six weeks. It has been in the public arena for over 12 months. I have written in detail to every school in the State. I have also written to many other people. The director general has written to all educationists in the State. Letters have been sent to schools, kindergartens, preprimary schools, educational groups and academics. Ten thousand easily digestible question and answer formats on school starting age, issues and options have been distributed. If members opposite want more copies to distribute, I will give them as many as they want. Thousands have been distributed around the State. The directors general of all States and Territories are trying to resolve these issues to get as much uniformity as they can because they recognise they have a unique opportunity to get it right for Australia right now. An officer has been assigned in the 29 education districts to deal with this issue, to meet schools and to attend meetings to

discuss the issue. I am getting a lot of feedback on that. People are telling us their views. The WA Council of State School Organisations, a very respectable body looking after the interests of parents and state schools, to its credit also raised this issue at its state conference last week. I do not make this comment as a criticism. However, it fairly heavily promoted a public meeting on this issue. It hired the main hall at the trotting ground in East Perth and 23 people turned up. I was disappointed for that organisation. However, it tells us something about the issue; that is, there is no rage about this issue in the community. Last year there was rage in the community because the changes could have impacted on children in the school system or about to go into preprimary or kindergarten. We have given an undertaking that any changes, if made, will apply to children who have not yet been born. As Minister for Education, I do not want to see this issue continue unresolved. I do not think there can be a political win for either side. We have a responsibility to the parents and children in this State to resolve the issue.

The overwhelming response I am getting from educationists, teachers, parents and from other States is that there is a lot of merit in helping kids early and that we should put in more resources. However, if those kids are born in the second half of the year, it is probably a good thing that they start school. Therefore, kids should start school not when they are five, but when they are six or will turn six at least during the first half of the year. There will be a similar change through preprimary and kindergarten. This will not affect any kids who have been born, let alone conceived, at this stage. In fairness to parents, if we are going to make a change, we need to make it now on educational grounds, and we need to make it well in advance of its impacting on children, parents and families, and people planning families.

Mr Leahy: A vast number of Aboriginal kids get no more than four or five years of formal education. You will reduce that by one year. That is significant.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The member opposite has a lot of Aboriginal kids in his electorate. I will be the first to concede, and I hope previous education Ministers will also concede, that we have failed Aboriginal kids and we are still failing Aboriginal kids. One of the problems which surprised me is that there is a retention problem between preprimary and year 1.

Mr Leahy: Not true.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: There is. Ten to 15 per cent of Aboriginal children in this State do not even get to school. I do not think that is a matter of politics. Since 1990, during the years of the Labor Administration and the early years of the coalition Administration, we have spent \$540m on Aboriginal education in this State. It gives me no joy to say that, despite that, there is no discernible improvement in retention rates, literacy rates or attendance at school. That is not a criticism of anyone. There has been a fantastic effort by teachers, the community, Aboriginal parents and the like. Despite that and the great programs, the biggest single problem in this State is the education of Aboriginal children. This will not impact adversely on them.

Mr Leahy: It will.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It will not. I will argue that. I have a personal commitment to those kids and I think everyone in this House shares that commitment.

DR CONSTABLE (Floreat) [8.40 pm]: The issue of early childhood education excites a lot of emotion, tension and argument. Perhaps in some ways that is not a bad thing. I agree to a large extent with some of the things the Minister said about how we must resolve this problem and deal with the major issues confronting us in education.

However, it is important to consider the consequences of delaying school entry age. I am not so sure those consequences have been considered to any great degree. We must be very careful that in doing this we will not be changing the goal posts without thinking about the consequences for education at a later stage in children's lives. I have a number of concerns that I would like to outline. One of them is that if we set a cut-off time for children to enter school, we will disadvantage children who may be very bright. A lot of flexibility must be built into any system. I do not see much difference between a child who is born on 30 June and one who is born on 1 July. We must consider the child born in May, six weeks premature and the child born in the first week of July. I hazard a guess that the child born in the first week in July would be more ready for school than the one born prematurely.

All those examples suggest to me that children who have problems may be better delaying entering school for six months while some may be better off entering school early. I have heard no suggestion tonight which deals with that issue. I hope it will be addressed. The school entry change will have consequential effects on the curriculum. I have not heard anyone talk about that tonight. If the school entry age were changed, there would be serious and important consequential effects on the structure of schools. We would have 13 year olds in our primary schools if the school entry age were changed to the middle of the year. If I looked around the primary schools that I often visit, I would see that 13 year olds are probably too large physically to be in primary school and have different interests from children in primary school. We may have to reconsider the structure of schools and resort to middle schools such as those already run by independent schools in Western Australia and those in Victoria.

That change alone would cost a huge amount of money in buildings, professional development and reorganisation of the curriculum; yet that has not been addressed. If we make that one change that we are debating tonight, it could result in a range of changes throughout the school system which I do not believe have been considered or costed in any general sense. Unless we do that, we will not be doing the right thing by the children of this State.

I have also examined the table that was distributed around the Chamber tonight and I agree that it could have had eight columns rather than seven. If the table were complete and followed the full school life of a child, we would see that children in New South Wales have six years of high school - a four plus two structure. They have four years of junior high school usually up to the age of 16 and two years, ending the year the child turns 18. Most children leaving school in New South Wales are aged 18 in the year they leave. Most children who leave school in Western Australia at present are 17 in the year they leave. However, in our secondary schools we have a three plus two structure amounting to only five years.

At the risk of talking about what I used to do before I came into Parliament, I enrolled hundreds of students during the seven years I worked in an independent school in Western Australia. One of my prime tasks was enrolments, interviews and assessments where necessary of children entering that school. In that time I interviewed and helped parents decide what was the most appropriate place for their children when they came from interstate or overseas. The most difficult time to fit children into school under our present structure, is not in their primary school years, but in their secondary years. I do not see that being addressed in what was discussed tonight. By all means we should resolve the issue of school entry age because the debate has been going on for probably two years or more. However, in doing so we must not avoid the issues we are creating and the consequences of that decision because they will cost the State a great deal and we will have only partially solved the problem that everyone is talking about of children moving from one State or one system to the other. That is far more important and has greater consequences for adolescents than for children in their primary years. Adolescents who are uprooted from their friends in another State to come to a school in our State may find it difficult to settle. Curricula between States will be out of kilter regardless. The same will apply if one goes from Western Australia to another State. I am rather surprised that the Minister has not mentioned any of those matters tonight. I ask him, if he is to make this decision by Christmas - that will be the Christmas present to parents of Western Australia - to consider the consequences for the rest of the Western Australian education system.

MR KOBELKE (Nollamara) [8.46 pm]: The member for Swan Hills suggested that the Government was doing a good thing by giving extra money to early childhood education. However, it must be clearly stated that all this Government is doing is putting in place a program commenced by the Labor Party and delayed by this Government for four years. The Minister in the other place stopped the process claiming that it was a Rolls Royce system and that we could not afford it. The Government got the message that it is a valued program that people want. We support the Government's undertaking it, but regret that it is too late. The member for Swan Hills also said that it was important that we have early assessment and early intervention. How can she argue for delaying the starting age if she believes that? That is a non-sequitur. How can members support the actions of this Government to take away child health nurses who are a crucial part of that early assessment of and assistance to children who have learning difficulties.

The member for Swan Hills also said that these children need space. As a result of the way this program has been implemented there has been an outcry from early childhood educators that the quality of the facilities are being reduced by this Government. I thought the member for Swan Hills was almost going to suggest that we should have a sandpit here in Parliament so that the cognitive testing could be given to members of Parliament!

The Minister suggested he was committed to choice. Choice for him was to allow the five year old program to have the flexibility of being four days a week or something less. I totally agree with the Minister on this matter, but he is reducing choice. We have a situation where parents, with some involvement of principals, can hold a child back in those early years. It is not popular, but it can and does happen. Parents can make a choice in the interests of their child. If they judge that their child is not ready for school, they will have no problem taking that child to school a year later. When we move back the starting age we will force all those children to start later. It is good that the Minister believes in choice. However, he will reduce the amount of choice. The Minister also suggested that this table is wrong; it is not wrong.

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

Mr KOBELKE: I take the Minister's interjections even though he would not take mine. The Minister does not want to read the table correctly. In my contribution to the debate earlier I pointed out that there was another year before this, that I would not go into that but I had the document if the Minister wanted it. All the States offer a three-four year old program as well; although it varies across the States. The table makes sense if we include the three-four year old program in the other States.

Mr C.J. Barnett: It does not add up.

Mr KOBELKE: The Minister was not willing to take my interjection so I will ask him now. Did he not come to his conclusion about children starting earlier by saying year 1 has common programs across Australia?

Mr C.J. Barnett: Where did I say that? To my recollection I did not say that.

Mr KOBELKE: The Minister did not say it; I am seeking the intellectual integrity of the Minister to tell us the basis of his statement that our children start earlier than in other States.

Mr C.J. Barnett: The idea of debate is simple: You say what you want to say and I say what I want to say, and then we disagree. You do not say what I want to say, and I do not say what you want to say. It is not all that complex; so, you say what you want to say - and I will think about what I want to say!

Mr KOBELKE: The trouble is that we are saying something that is totally opposite. The Minister claims that he is correct, and I claim that I am correct. With some argument allowed by the Acting Speaker we could resolve this difficulty. However, the Minister seems to have been caught out. He does not want to address the issue. He can only say that children in Western Australia start school earlier if he bases his argument on year 1 being equivalent around Australia. That is the only way to reach that conclusion. It is fundamental to the Minister's statement, but his statement is wrong because we do not have any comparability between year 1 programs around Australia.

Mr C.J. Barnett: We could argue forever. Will you say clearly that you believe that children in Western Australia in certain school years are older than children in other States? As I understand it, your position tonight has been that you believe children in Western Australia are older than those in other States when they start school. Is that your position?

Mr KOBELKE: Yes. The Minister will find that the member for Floreat agrees. The Minister and a small cohort in the Education Department are the only ones who believe otherwise. I suggest that the Minister ask the director general. She is experienced in other States. She will tell the Minister the truth: He is wrong, because he has made a comparison between a year 1 program here, in Victoria and in New South Wales, and in doing that he makes a false assumption. Comparing our year 1 with preprimary is not an exact match, because the systems are different. However, there is a reasonable comparability between our year 1 and the kindergartens in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, and the preparatory year in Victoria. To be honest, those are the years that must line up, because that is the start of schooling.

I also asked the question: Does the Minister reject the material provided by Hon Norman Moore to the Senate Committee?

Mr C.J. Barnett: I have not read the material -

Mr KOBELKE: I gave the Minister a copy of that during debate.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Big deal!

Mr KOBELKE: The Minister for Education has no position regarding whether there are 13 years of schooling in other States.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I have not read the material, so I will not comment on it.

Mr KOBELKE: Does the Minister know how many years of schooling there are in New South Wales and Victoria?

Mr C.J. Barnett: Tell me!

Mr KOBELKE: There are 13 years. Minister Norman Moore acknowledges that in his letter. The only way to get 13 years of schooling is by counting kindergarten and the preparatory year as the first year.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You want to argue whether the table and the Crowley report are correct, and so on. You cannot answer the question: Should children be three or three and a half or two and a half when they start kindergarten? The mums and dads have a view, but you cannot express your view.

Mr KOBELKE: Those children should go into age-appropriate programs.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Very decisive!

Mr KOBELKE: That is what it is all about, Minister! The reason we cannot have a rational debate on the issue is because the Minister is being dishonest about the starting age. If we do not have an honest debate about what age children start school, how can we advance rational debate on this important issue?

Mr C.J. Barnett: We have had the Scott report, and we have had debate -

Mr KOBELKE: The point was driven home when I indicated New South Wales, Victoria and some other States have 13 years of schooling. Minister Norman Moore and the educationists have acknowledged that. We need to sit down and do some simple arithmetic. Those States have six years of secondary schooling, which means seven years of

primary education. According to the former Minister and authorities around Australia, those States have seven years of primary education. The children leave primary school after year 6. How do the maths work, if they do seven years at primary school, and year 6 is the last year of primary school?

Mr C.J. Barnett: Can I ask a question?

Mr KOBELKE: Answer my question first: The Minister would not allow me to interject on him. I am giving him the opportunity to answer a rational question: Does that mean that preparatory schooling or kindergarten is taken as the first year of schooling in other States?

Mr C.J. Barnett: It varies according to the table - there are the reception years -

Mr KOBELKE: It is simple arithmetic. There are 13 years of schooling. Does the Minister dispute that? Am I right or wrong?

Mr C.J. Barnett: You are probably right. I will ask you a question: How old is a child when he finishes secondary school in this State compared with New South Wales?

Mr KOBELKE: The Minister should answer my question first. He is trying to distract me. If the Minister answers my question first, I will come back to his question. Does the Minister accept there are 13 years of schooling in Victoria and New South Wales? Does he accept there are six years of secondary schooling in those States, or does the Minister have a different viewpoint?

Mr C.J. Barnett: They have six years of secondary schooling.

Mr KOBELKE: Does that mean there are seven years of primary schooling in New South Wales and Victoria?

Mr C.J. Barnett: No, because you must define the terminology used. New South Wales has a preschool and kindergarten year. Which one do you want to include?

Mr KOBELKE: It is a simple question. If the Minister thinks the questions are false or tricky he should tell me. I do not see anything tricky about asking the Minister a question about the number of years of schooling in Victoria and New South Wales. We may differ on the answer. Does the Minister say that he does not agree that there are 13 years of schooling in those States?

Mr C.J. Barnett: I am not interested in New South Wales.

Mr KOBELKE: We want to make comparisons, but the Minister is fudging by using different names for different matters. We must have some understanding about this. It is fairly easy to work out how many years of schooling there are in a state system.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I can tell you how many there are in Western Australia. There are 12 years plus preprimary plus kindergarten.

Mr KOBELKE: No. I am asking about years of formal schooling. How many years of formal schooling do children undertake in Western Australia?

Mr C.J. Barnett: There are 12 years plus preparatory plus kindergarten. If we change the entry age, many of the kids will come from preprimary.

Mr KOBELKE: I do not wish to take up any more time. It is a simple debate. However, obviously the Minister is caught out and he does not want to answer these simple questions. These are logical, not tricky questions. The Minister wants us to take the two years before formal education. He is either overlooking the fact or simply does not know that New South Wales and Victoria provide schooling for two years prior to formal education; that is, before children enter kindergarten they have two years of preschooling. The Minister should look at the report. The children in those States have two years, like our four year olds program, which is just part time for two half-days a week.

Mr C.J. Barnett: New South Wales has a preschool year. The table on which you rely shows New South Wales as having a preschool year and the kindergarten year is year 1.

Mr KOBELKE: I do not wish to prolong debate. The Minister does not want to face the facts. The Minister has been saying things which are not true. He has continued to do that during this debate. Unfortunately that makes it difficult to have rational debate. It is a complicated area, and the Minister has obviously decided to adopt a political tactic to muddy the waters and say things which are half true and therefore avoid addressing the fundamental issue. He should know, and parents who transfer interstate would know, that our children start full time, formal education at a later age than children in the rest of Australia.

The Minister interjected a moment ago regarding the finishing age. With 13 years of formal schooling in other States and 12 years here, children in other States start about 6 months earlier and finish about six months older.

The Minister suggested that not many people attended the meeting to which I referred. That is correct, but it is because not a great deal of political interest is shown in the matter. The Minister has done a smart side-step. He has said that this provision would not come into effect for children already born. The fact that he has removed the political heat by delaying it, does not change the damage that this can do to our children and our education system.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You are the Education spokesman for the Australian Labor Party. We are talking to the community, but the view of members on this side is that, although we have not made a decision, we should change the cut off date. Therefore, children will be a little older. That is the view of the coalition. After 12 months does the Australian Labor Party have a view?

Mr KOBELKE: Yes. Our view is that there is value in a uniform starting age across Australia. If that starting age means that we must start our children earlier, we will consider doing that. We would have to start our children earlier to come into line with other States, because our children start later.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Are you aware that the Labor Government in New South Wales proposes to have children there even older than they currently are when they start?

Mr KOBELKE: That is totally untrue. I spoke to the Minister's office in New South Wales a few days ago. I was told it had not adopted any position. It will release a discussion paper. It will listen to public debate and then it will form a view. The Minister for Education should not try to twist this as he has done with the starting age issue. That is not the case as was related to me from the office of the Minister in New South Wales.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I suggest you speak to the New South Wales Minister.

Mr KOBELKE: The Minister for Education also tried to shift ground on South Australia when he said things contrary to the media release that was issued. It was only because I read the media release that I caught the Minister out on that.

Mr C.J. Barnett: South Australia has a unique system that works very well for it.

Mr KOBELKE: I do not wish to delay the debate any further. The last thing I ask of the Minister, if he is willing to give me an answer, is whether the discussion paper he waved around has been mailed out. If so, on what date was it mailed?

Mr C.J. Barnett: I would not call it a discussion paper. It is an issues and options paper. Ten thousand copies of it were sent all over the State.

Mr KOBELKE: I have not seen a copy, and none of the schools in my area has seen one.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I will send you a box of them if you like. It was mailed to schools on 20 August. I saw copies of it before that.

Mr KOBELKE: I thank the Minister.

Question (words to be deleted) put and passed.

Question (words to be substituted put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (27)

Mr C.J. Barnett
Mr Board
Mr Bradshaw
Dr Constable
Mr Court
Mr Cowan
Mr Day
Mrs Edwardes
Dr Hames

Mr Johnson
Mr Lewis
Mr Marshall
Mr Nicholls
Mr Omodei
Mr Osborne
Mrs Parker
Mr Pandal
Mr Prince

Mr Shave
Mr W. Smith
Mr Strickland
Mr Trenorden
Mr Tubby
Dr Turnbull
Mrs van de Klashorst
Mr Wiese
Mr Bloffwitch (*Teller*)

Noes (17)

Ms Anwyl
Mr M. Barnett
Mr Cunningham
Dr Edwards
Dr Gallop
Mr Graham

Mr Grill
Mrs Hallahan
Mr Kobelke
Mr Leahy
Mr Riebeling
Mr Ripper

Mrs Roberts
Mr D.L. Smith
Mr Thomas
Dr Watson
Ms Warnock (*Teller*)

Pairs

Mr Minson
Mr McNee
Mr Blaikie
Mr House
Mr Kierath

Mr Brown
Mrs Henderson
Mr Marlborough
Mr McGinty
Mr Catania

Question thus passed.

Motion, as Amended

Question put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (27)

Mr C.J. Barnett
Mr Board
Mr Bradshaw
Dr Constable
Mr Court
Mr Cowan
Mr Day
Mrs Edwardes
Dr Hames

Mr Johnson
Mr Lewis
Mr Marshall
Mr Nicholls
Mr Omodei
Mr Osborne
Mrs Parker
Mr Pental
Mr Prince

Mr Shave
Mr W. Smith
Mr Strickland
Mr Trenorden
Mr Tubby
Dr Turnbull
Mrs van de Klashorst
Mr Wiese
Mr Bloffwitch (*Teller*)

Noes (17)

Ms Anwyl
Mr M. Barnett
Mr Cunningham
Dr Edwards
Dr Gallop
Mr Graham

Mr Grill
Mrs Hallahan
Mr Kobelke
Mr Leahy
Mr Riebeling
Mr Ripper

Mrs Roberts
Mr D.L. Smith
Mr Thomas
Dr Watson
Ms Warnock (*Teller*)

Pairs

Mr Minson
Mr McNee
Mr Blaikie
Mr House
Mr Kierath

Mr Brown
Mrs Henderson
Mr Marlborough
Mr McGinty
Mr Catania

Question thus passed.

MOTION - CHILD CARE CENTRES, ABOLITION OF SUBSIDIES

DR WATSON (Kenwick) [9.10 pm]: On behalf of the member for Morley, I move -

That this House opposes the abolition of operational subsidies for community based long day care centres and the resultant \$21 per week increases in child care fees for children under three.

As with the debate for aged care services, health and education, the devil is in the detail. Child care centres in my own electorate have calculated that not \$21 but \$35 per child is likely to be the increase as a consequence of the abolition of the operational subsidies for community based child care centres. I note with interest from the publication sent to me that Senator Jocelyn Newman, the federal Minister for Social Security, is to consult with state and territory Governments and the child care industry on a range of issues to do with child care, including the development of a national planning framework. This budget decision has been made in a vacuum, because there is no plan and no framework. The only thing that is explicit is that the Government is to withdraw operational subsidies for community based long day care centres. Why? It is to encourage greater efficiency and responsiveness to the needs of families! It is also mooted that the Government will support the continued growth of additional child care places in the private sector, particularly in family based day care. Nowhere in this plan for consultation on decisions that have been made is there any acknowledgment that the best interests of the child must be considered. It is purely an economic rationalist approach to child care.

I was involved with various lobby groups through the 1970s, despite the fact that I have no children of my own, which were advocating that until women were able to enter the paid work force with regular, accessible, affordable child care that was of the highest quality and standard, they would not achieve the kind of liberation that had been the catchcry of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The slogan in Australia was that child care is a right and not a privilege. I still hold that that slogan underlies a very good philosophy for the way to approach child care. In 1985 and 1986 I was a member of two steering committees in my electorate and a member of the early management committees for

the Boogurlarri centre in Langford and the Treasure Island Child Care Centre in Cannington. I still have regular contact with the clientele and workers at those centres, and with their union representatives and parents. Nothing gives me greater joy than to spend some time there listening to what the children are doing.

Those community based child care centres were located on the basis of need. The Commonwealth together with the then Department of Community Welfare formulated a plan for developing a statistical picture of metropolitan Perth and the rural areas to identify the need for long day care. Child care would be accessible by parents living in those areas, the services would be of a very high standard and quality, and parents and other community members would be engaged in the management of those services, both in developing policy and taking an overview of day to day activities. The criteria that were developed, and which mostly hold good now, certainly for the community based centres, were that the first priority would go to working parents where the mother particularly would be unable to participate in the paid work force without access to high quality, affordable child care. The second priority went to people who were in some kind of training for work or a long and ongoing education course. The third priority was for parents who had some kind of disability or who had a child with some kind of disability. It has been my pleasure to have a long association with those two community based child care centres, and from 1989 to include Wirrabirra in Gosnells. We have also seen the development of private child care. I shall touch on how that has burgeoned in the past few years. Unfortunately, we have not seen enough workplace child care centres develop, but private industry and, particularly, individual workplaces are yet to fully explore those options.

I have also had contact with family day care programs run both through Communicare in Cannington and Roberta Jull, stationed in Armadale and Gosnells. There is no doubt that family long day care provides an excellent service; at the moment it is provided by women in their own homes for up to four children and one child in full time preprimary school. This means the women can provide both long day, before and after school care and care on the one day that the child does not go to school. A number of concerns and issues have been raised recently by members of management committees and by the people who work in those centres. The Government's budget announcement can only exacerbate those concerns. As a consequence of approaches from staff and management committee members, in June this year I put a series of questions on notice to the Minister for Family and Children's Services. Some interesting data emerged in the answers to those questions. I wanted to know how people who were planning to build private, long day care centres went about planning the location, because the general feeling is that they would be taking business away from the community based child care centres. The Minister told me that in May 1996 there were 4 487 community based places in Western Australia, 8 736 private places, 3 093 family day care places in the subsidised scheme and 1 845 private family day care places. Of course we still must acknowledge that most child care is informal as many children stay for the day with neighbours, friends and members of the extended family. A utilisation study recently completed by the Lady Gowrie Resource and Training Centre estimated about 14 000 licensed places operating in Western Australia. The survey dealt with 224 long day care centres, representing 9 300 places - about two-thirds of the total.

Child care is a growing industry, not only in Western Australia but also throughout Australia. In January, at long last, the State Government made an agreement with the former Federal Government to provide 2 649 new child care places. I am pleased that that agreement looks like it will continue to be honoured, although I dare say that the budgetary announcement might sway that agreement into the private sector. It was announced that 207 places would be created, and a further 76 places would commence in the near future. Another 247 places are to be implemented in 1997 and 410 places in 1998. The location of those places now will probably come under question because the Federal Government will emphasise family day care; therefore, it seems that little incentive will be provided for any interested group to support community based long day care centres responsibly, knowing it will not receive an operating subsidy. Most of the new places will go to long day family care. It seems the State and Federal Governments are prepared to let market forces determine the success and failure of new private centres. I do not detract from the efforts of and care provided in the private sector. I was honoured to be asked to open a centre in Canning Vale on Saturday which will provide a service for rapidly developing suburbs in the area. It is easily accessible along Ranford Road in Canning Vale, and it is already more than half full although it has been open for only three weeks.

The State Government indicates that it is the responsibility of prospective owners of private centres to obtain their own information about child care needs. They can access information held on a database at the Department for Family and Children's Services, but responsibility for determining the location of services lies with prospective owners. Only community based services have an obligation to ensure that services meet community needs. For example, three child care service operators were operating in Cannington in December 1994: First, the Treasure Island centre operated with Government subsidies and had 54 long day care places; second, a Communicare centre operated with government subsidies with long day care and occasional care service for 28 places and provided respite care for those families meeting the criteria; and third, the private long day care centre known as Gum Nut Junction operated in Wharf Street with 38 places. There were 120 work related long day care places in Cannington at the end of the 1994. However, a new centre was known to be planned at that stage licensed for 76 places, and that is now operational. Practically overnight, a 62.5 per cent increase in available places transformed the nature of child care in Cannington. Since then a new centre has opened in Beckenham near Cannington on the other side of William

Street, and I understand a centre in East Cannington will be operational in the next four weeks. Undoubtedly, Cannington is oversupplied with long day care places.

At the beginning of last year a meeting was called by the private industry to provide information about setting up a centre in the south east corridor. I am told that 57 expressions of interest were received at that meeting. Therefore, 57 potential private operators, one could say entrepreneurs, were keen to know more about how they could establish a money making child care centre in the south east corridor through Cannington and Gosnells through to Armadale. This concerned those of us wanting to ensure quality; it certainly concerned people operating the Treasure Island Child Care Centre.

The State five-year-old program is now more accessible, and the centre now has fewer five-year-olds than it did in the past. As some community and school based four-year-old centres are accessible to families, the centre has also lost some four-year-olds. However, space is always needed for infants to two-year-old children. The required staff to infant ratio is much higher than the staff ratio with children aged two to six years. Some of the private centres are reluctant to advertise spaces for children under two year of age. These dynamics are affecting the child care industry, and fewer four and five-year-old children places are used, yet not enough spaces are available for infants under the age of two years. This is common to all the community based day care centres. Some of them have started their own form of four-year-old programs by employing trained pre-primary teachers.

This rapid expansion of private child care has been due to a number of factors, not the least of which is the profit motive. Another factor is that the operators need not prove the demand for service in the area; they can test the market and market forces will determine whether they succeed. I am concerned that in that market mentality, quality might be sacrificed. It seems that one of the requirements before any licence is issued is the demonstration of need in that location.

Since 1990, 11 new government funded, community based child care centres have been built in Western Australia, and 148 new commercial centres, so that the ratio of community based to private child care centres is about 1:14. The commercial centres will profit from the way in which the federal Budget is framed and aimed. I fear that the survival of community based child care centres will depend on the way in which they can trim their cloth to fit.

Despite the coalition's pledge to maintain existing child care arrangements, the operational subsidies for publicly funded child care centres have been abolished, but not the subsidies for family day care, occasional care or out of school care. There is a reduced rebate for those families with an income over what is to be known as the family tax initiative threshold, from 30 per cent to 20 per cent of actual child care costs. There is restricted eligibility to access to child care assistance, which has been capped at 50 hours per week per child. Child care assistance and child care cash rebate ceilings have been frozen for two years and extra income allowed for additional dependent children has been abolished. Enormous changes have been signalled in the child care industry. We have read newspaper reports of the way in which these will impact on individual families. However, the consequences will be felt in formal day care for many families who will not be able to afford that \$35. It will mean also that women will not have the ability to participate in the paid work force.

The consequence for the private child care operators will be good. They will be the winners. Already in this morning's newspaper - just one week after the Budget was announced - are for sale advertisements for child care centres. Apparently some real estate agents - in this instance it is Rayner & Associates - call themselves child care specialists. They advertise child care centres for sale or child care opportunities where investors want developers because, they say, the Budget's cancellation of operational subsidies does not apply to private centres. Another real estate agent advertises "no budget problems here." The entrepreneurs - the ones with the dollar signs in their eyes as far as child care goes - have seen that niche in the market for them.

Let us look briefly at the consequences of the removal of these operational subsidies. I have had long interviews with people engaged in the management of child care centres. I will outline what those changes will mean for Treasure Island Child Care Centre. The new Budget allows a maximum 50 hours a week per child. However, the experience of Treasure Island Child Care Centre is that parents need 52.5 hours a week for long day care. Treasure Island is open between 7.00 am and 6.30 pm, so it runs a 57.5 hour week to cater for parents who might be starting work at 7.30 am or completing work at 6.00 pm. Parents have half an hour leeway to get between the child care centre and their workplace. Community based centres have always been encouraged to meet the needs of the community and to be flexible. We were debating the vocational training legislation in this place yesterday. The retail industry is one of the expanding industries to the end of this century. Cannington has a huge retail sector, and Treasure Island is called upon to open on Thursday evening and all day Saturday so women can participate in those hours in the paid work force. The centre does not open now on Thursday evening and Saturday, but there is a demand in Cannington for that kind of child care over those hours.

The 57.5 hours for which the centre is open is paid by the Government now, but not by the client. The child care centre will lose \$49 000 this year as its operational subsidy. Either the fees must increase by \$35 a week, or quality must be reduced. There is no alternative. Most of the people who use Treasure Island cannot afford \$35 a week for one child, and if they have two children there, they certainly cannot afford \$70. Some of the decisions that might

need to be made include dismissing the clerical assistant who provides 15 hours work a week. That will impact on quality because the child carers must do the clerical work. The centre might have to employ 16 year olds for two years and then dismiss them at 18 when they are entitled to higher wages. It might have to take subsidised Commonwealth Employment Service workers for relief work. The centre certainly will not be able to provide stress leave and non-contact time for their paid workers. It may have to tender out the cooking, laundry and handyman duties or share those costs with other centres. The centre will probably have to ask parents to bring in nappies and food for their children for the day. Nothing will be provided that might be seen as an extra that is a vital part of the child's stimulatory program while he or she is at the centre - for example, kindy gyms.

A full fee at the moment for a two parent working family with two children is about \$310 a week, and for one child it is \$155 a week. However, under the arrangement now those parents pay \$77 from their pocket for two children, and \$44.60 for one child. However, if they must pay \$35 on top of that for two children, they would be paying \$147 a week, or for one child, \$80 a week. The differences will be enormous depending on whether a family is on one income or two. The centres' charges vary. They each have their own particular formula that can be manipulated through the hours.

Does the Minister really think John Howard's Government is for all of us or just for some of us? He promised that it would be for all of us, but I fear it is only for some of them.

DR EDWARDS (Maylands) [9.38 pm]: The cuts to child care are some of the most significant that have flowed out of the federal Budget. One group that they really impact on is the group that is largest among women; that is, those women who are working part time. Part time workers represent a greater number of women than women who are at home full time or in the work force full time. It is these women and these families about whom I am very concerned.

I am most concerned about the cut to the operational subsidy for community based long day care centres and the cut in child care assistance that accompanies that change. Other cuts will have a huge impact, not the least of which is the decision to pay subsidies directly to parents rather than to the centres, as occurs at the moment. As the member for Kenwick pointed out, traditionally, community based long day care centres have provided places for young children, particularly those under the age of two years. One of the articles I read today, although it is a Victorian example it reflects the situation in Western Australia, states that in one municipal area there were 35 day care centres but only two were private centres providing care for children in the 0 to two years age bracket. The reason private centres shy away from providing day care for children under two years of age is that it is much more expensive. Many more staff members are required to cater for the children because they are more demanding. It is also more stressful to work with younger children. Anyone who has walked into a room in which two or three babies are crying at the same time will understand how stressful it can be to work in that environment.

The value of the operational subsidy has been to keep the costs down in those centres. That subsidy has been used for wages and to provide food and nappies, thereby reducing the costs for parents. I find it rather strange that the operational subsidy should be cut for community based long day care centres, but retained for family day care, occasional care and after school care. I was interested to read in *The Australian Financial Review* that this move was warmly welcomed by the child care industry, which said the subsidy for family day care, occasional care and after school care is crucial for absorbing up-front costs and maintaining care at an affordable level. If it is crucial in this part of the sector, it should be more crucial in the long day care sector where the children are younger and the periods of care are longer.

Unfortunately, the whole rationale is ideologically based and I think the Government will come to regret it. The argument is that if the operational subsidy is removed from the community based centres, they will align more closely to the private day care centres. This argument is fallacious. Private day care centres tend not to take younger children. The member for Kenwick provided some statistics for Western Australia on that matter. There is a joke in this sector that if people want day care for a young child, they must plan ahead and go on a waiting list for at least nine months. That presents a real problem for women who must return to work when their children are very young because they must get their names on a waiting list soon after they become pregnant. This brings up the notion of choice. When I had a very young child I was able to afford a nanny, but it is extremely expensive and many women in the work force cannot afford it. Therefore, they must rely on long day care centres.

Another reality of the issue is that private day care is often more expensive than community based care. That can be established by ringing various centres and asking their fees. One of the reasons is that the private centres must make a profit. One of the mechanisms that keeps private day care fees down currently is competition with the community based centres whose fees are generally much lower. That competition will be removed, and it is predicted in the child care industry that once the fees are increased in the community based centres, the fees will rise in the private sector. Therefore, the cost will increase for all parents as a result of a change which was supposed to provide savings. It is ridiculous.

A further issue about which I am concerned is accreditation. I am aware of a number of community based centres that have obtained accreditation, and one centre that has been accredited for three years. That means it must have

done particularly well because accreditation can be granted for periods between one and three years. Unfortunately, centres cannot advertise that they are accredited and the only way to establish that is by asking the centre whether it is accredited and for how long. It is one method of higher standards. I have noted in the Budget suggestions that accreditation will continue and it will apply to all the different types of care available. However, these changes fly in the face of that suggestion because there is no doubt that accreditation involves some costs. It involves the direct cost of bringing policies up to date and staff undergoing training so that the accreditation standards can be met, and an ongoing direct cost because the centre must maintain the standard in order to remain accredited.

There is also an indirect cost in the time that must be spent going through the accreditation process, developing policies, communicating them to parents and other interested parties, and on staff training. It is unlikely that the private sector will rush into accreditation because it will be costly and it is not likely to see the benefits. There is no doubt there will be many benefits, one of which will be to get parents better acquainted with what is happening. Another benefit will be raising standards, particularly in staff training. However, I do not think those benefits have any monetary value and I am not sure that the private sector will seek accreditation. I shall be very curious to see how accreditation continues given, on the one hand, the so-called commitment to it and, on the other hand, the cut in funding in the whole area.

One of the concerns in this sector is that the Government may change the staff to children ratio and people are fearful of how this will impact on children in the nought to two years age group. I spoke to the people at one centre today which has a staff to children ratio in the nought to two years infant group of 1:4; that is, in a room with 12 children are three staff members. Those people are concerned that they may be forced into a situation, as a result of these cuts, whereby only two staff members will take care of 14 children. It is quite stressful to deal with children in this age group and a ratio of 2:14 is not enough.

The other change is to decrease the number of hours a week for which child care assistance is available to 50 hours. Many centres are open more than 50 hours a week. The centre to which I referred is open from 7.30 am to 6.00 pm, which is 52.5 hours a week. Centres such as this face a number of dilemmas as a result of this limit on child care assistance to 50 hours a week. How should they reduce their hours? They have the option of making the parents pay more if their child is there on Friday afternoon after the 50 hours for that week have expired. They could close earlier - but that will create problems for parents who must work until 5.30 pm, or open later but, again, that will create problems for shift workers. These changes are forcing the community based sector to move away from meeting the needs of the parents. The centre to which my child goes has decided to open at 7.30 am and close at 6.00 pm because that will best meet the needs of parents. I have a big problem when Parliament sits because I cannot get to the centre by 6.00 pm. Therefore, I must arrange for my husband to leave work early or for someone else to pick up my child from the centre.

This change will really affect single parents. I thought the Government would want to take whatever steps it could to keep single parents in the work force. There is no doubt that families which are on higher incomes are better off not only in monetary terms but also in health and a range of other areas. These changes will result in a fee increase for parents, and it is likely that the quality of care will decrease. I will not go into the reasons that I say that, but I have a number of statements that back up that suggestion. We will also see the end of community-based day care centres, and it will be a very sad day for this State and country.

I will conclude with what this Budget has done for women. The Federal Government has had a go at improving conditions for women who are at home full time, but what it will provide to those women is so meagre that very few will benefit. The \$500 means tested rebate for a spouse who is at home with a child under the age of five will not give women who are in the work force any encouragement to move back home. Ms Eva Cox from the Women's Electoral Lobby said -

Basically, you can get about \$40 a week to stay at home with your kids. If you are working 10 hours a week for \$10 an hour and declaring that, you are being taxed \$40 a week because you lose the \$500 and the parenting allowance. You have to earn a fair bit before it becomes worthwhile.

I thought they were the very women whom the Government wanted to stay in the work force so that they would increase their opportunities to advance their careers, and the very women whom the Government wanted to continue to access child care so they could continue to study and improve their chances of earning higher incomes. Unfortunately, there is an ideological tilt here, where the Government has tried to give more money to women who are at home but has not succeeded. All it has done is cut the benefits that used to flow through to women who are working and relying on child care to help them to stay in the work force.

MRS EDWARDES (Kingsley - Minister for Family and Children's Services) [9.52 pm]: Child care is, no doubt, one of the most important decisions that parents make when they choose to enter the work force. As a mother, I have used both a community-based and a private centre. I used the private centre used some 23 years ago when it was not

fashionable for women to leave their children in a child care centre. I chose those centres because of the quality of care that they provided. The member for Kenwick indicated that although she tended to believe that private child care centres were there to make a profit, she did not want to be critical of the quality of care that they provided. That is important, because the information that has been provided indicates that there is no difference between community-based and private child care centres with regard to the number of complaints that are received in proportion to the number of places that they provide. The Government plays an important role in the quality of child care, and also in ensuring that all children enjoy quality care under whichever option their parents choose, whether that be family-based child care, community-based child care, private child care, or the many other options that are available. That is what parents want. They want to have access to quality child care at a fair price. The information which I have about fees is different from the information of the member for Maylands. The fees for community-based centres are around \$150 per week, whereas the fees for private centres range from \$130 to \$170. Community-based centres are run by the parents, so the \$8m, or about \$5 000 per centre, which will be given to the community-based centres to enable them to restructure will obviously allow the parents to decide the type of child care that they would like.

I have had the pleasure of working with - I suppose I am biased - the Moolanda Child Care Centre, which is an excellent example and has been used as a role model for other child care centres. I was on the steering committee of that centre, and my young son attended that centre. It has produced many policies and handbooks which have been used by other centres. It has produced a video, in conjunction with four other community-based centres, which is used as a teaching resource for training colleges. That centre is made even more excellent by the calibre of its staff. However, that is not to say that the private child care centres are not also providing good quality child care.

Amendment to Motion

Mrs EDWARDES: I move -

To delete all words after "House" with a view to substituting the following -

supports the provision of high quality child care options being delivered equitably in terms of access and price, and a wide consultative process with the Western Australian community and industry through the National Planning Framework to achieve these outcomes.

MRS van de KLASHORST (Swan Hills) [9.56 pm]: I second the amendment. I also support the fact that so many women in our society are in the work force and an increasing number of women are moving into the work force, and quality child care with choice is a must for all of those women. Not only women but men are single parents, and they too are looking for quality child care. This relates to the debate that we had in this House earlier this evening about the quality of early childhood education. We need to have properly trained personnel to work in these child care centres in order to ensure quality care. I believe the Government of Western Australian sets the quality standards for these centres. I can see from the child care centres in my electorate, which are both private and community-based, that the quality of care is regarded as most important, and there does not appear to be a lot of difference between them with regard to quality. It behoves the Government to ensure that this continues and that there is no difference between the two types of centres.

The Federal Government will give approximately \$5 000 to community-based child care centres to help them to work out how to change from being subsidised by the Government to the parents being given a personal subsidy. The community-based centres have a terrific advantage because they are run by the community and the parents can ensure that the centre is run proficiently. The parents will be subsidised, so they will have an opportunity to say how they want to use that money to provide the extra things that the centre needs. The community-based centres will be able to use that \$5 000 to make sure that they are not disadvantaged in comparison with the other centres. All parents in Western Australia will be given the diversification of child care that they need. I support the amendment.

DR WATSON (Kenwick) [9.59 pm]: The Opposition does not support the amendment. The Government has wimped-out on the main issue; that is, opposition to the operational subsidy. Parents will not be able to afford the impost of the extra \$35 a week. It will put women back at home and out of the work force. It will mean women will not be able to make those choices to be economically independent, and it will damage families. Of course we support the provision of high quality child care. That is a motherhood statement, and everybody supports that. We oppose the amendment because - frankly, I am outraged - the Government will not support our opposition to the abolition of operational subsidies for community based long day care centres and the resulting impost on families.

Question (words to be deleted) put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (27)

Mr Ainsworth
Mr C.J. Barnett
Mr Board
Mr Bradshaw
Dr Constable
Mr Court
Mr Cowan
Mrs Edwardes
Dr Hames

Mr Johnson
Mr Lewis
Mr Marshall
Mr Nicholls
Mr Omodei
Mr Osborne
Mrs Parker
Mr Pandal
Mr Prince

Mr Shave
Mr W. Smith
Mr Strickland
Mr Trenorden
Mr Tubby
Dr Turnbull
Mrs van de Klashorst
Mr Wiese
Mr Bloffwitch (*Teller*)

Noes (18)

Ms Anwyl
Mr Catania
Mr Cunningham
Dr Edwards
Dr Gallop
Mr Graham

Mr Grill
Mrs Hallahan
Mrs Henderson
Mr Kobelke
Mr Leahy
Mr Riebeling

Mr Ripper
Mrs Roberts
Mr D.L. Smith
Mr Thomas
Dr Watson
Ms Warnock (*Teller*)

Pairs

Mr Minson
Mr McNee
Mr Blaikie
Mr House
Mr Kierath

Mr Brown
Mr Marlborough
Mr McGinty
Mr Bridge
Mr M. Barnett

Question thus passed.

Question (words to be substituted) put and passed.

Motion, as Amended

Question put and passed.

CURTIN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AMENDMENT BILL*Second Reading*

Debate resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MS ANWYL (Kalgoorlie) [10.06 pm]: To recap on my comments earlier today: The amalgamation is the first step to the establishment of a university in the goldfields. That is the principal reason I am supporting the Bill. People are sceptical and cynical about that prospect, and to a certain degree I understand that. There is plenty of precedent for the establishment of a university college as a first step towards the establishment of a university. To that end, I remind members that the Australian National University was once the Canberra university college; the Toowoomba university college existed; and the University of New England in Armidale was initially a university college. I gave the example earlier of the James Cook University in Townsville which, before becoming a university, was the Townsville university college affiliated with the University of Queensland. The vision of those who brought forward the concept of an amalgamation was largely as a first step towards achieving a university somewhere other than in Perth.

The naming of the amalgamation has been of some interest. It is with regret that I note all the precedents I just mentioned - that is, the colleges in Canberra, Toowoomba, Townsville and Armidale - have been broken by the retention of the word "Curtin" as the principal name for this university college. It is with some regret that I note that neither the Kalgoorlie university college option nor, what I suggest would be an appropriate name, the goldfields university college option has been found to be acceptable to either the Curtin council or the Minister.

I also note in some detail the benefits I see for the amalgamation. It is the first step to the establishment of a university out of Perth. As a result of the move towards the amalgamation, significant federal funding was made available - I think the member for Nollamara touched on that - of almost \$12m. One of the principal results of that funding being made available is an increase in the places to be offered. The Minister in the second reading speech referred to the need to improve retention rates within the region. I think retention rates are extremely significant for a number of reasons.

One of the principal problems in relation to retention is the perception that the quality of secondary education available in the goldfields is not equal to that available in the metropolitan area. One must look not only at the number of students remaining at school until year 12, but also at the number of families that leave the goldfields

because they perceive that insufficient educational resources are available in the secondary sector. The position with Eastern Goldfields High School is not helping that whole perception. The present enrolment is 1 250, having risen from 1 170 since February. I am told by the parents and citizens association that the expected enrolment next year is 1 350. We have one other school - a private school - that offers secondary education, and that has a waiting list. There is no doubt in my mind that something must be done urgently to relieve the pressure. If we cannot have a second school, we certainly need greater infrastructure in the secondary school already there. The Minister may care to take this opportunity to address that issue briefly.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Kalgoorlie is booming and that is good. The best way of developing Kalgoorlie would be eventually to have a senior college with one or two middle schools.

Ms ANWYL: I may well agree, but the word "eventually" concerns me.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I am conscious that the school is growing and that the facilities are strained.

Ms ANWYL: Enrolment has increased by 80 since the beginning of this year and it is expected to increase to 1 350 next year. There are very real concerns.

I do not wish to labour the point, but other speakers have talked about the difficulty of attracting academic staff to Kalgoorlie Boulder. That is one of the arguments mounted by the Minister to explain why the School of Mines cannot be the central focus -

Mr C.J. Barnett: It has been put to me; I have not mounted it.

Ms ANWYL: In any event, one of the key considerations is that academic staff will not remain because they do not see their children getting a secondary education. The sooner that problem is fixed, the better. I also point out that there are some steps to establish a further independent secondary school.

Retention is clearly a very important issue, and I applaud the Minister's comments in that regard. However, the economic significance of both the Western Australian School of Mines and the college cannot be underrated. For that reason, anything that will enhance the status of that university college is very positive.

The Minister referred to the importance of upgrading the links with Curtin University of Technology, saying that that will be important in attracting students from overseas and elsewhere in Australia. It is clearly appropriate to upgrade resources and so on. Again, that raises the question of funding being available to enable more places to be established. There is not much point in having more students if there are no more tertiary places. That is especially relevant given the recent cut of \$44m in this year's federal Budget. As I said, the principal problems relate to the issue of asset change. I have mentioned the negative effect that the naming will have. My preferred choice would be either Kalgoorlie university college or Goldfields university college.

The Goldfields Art Centre was also mentioned by the member for Nollamara. I seek further detail from the Minister about the precise nature of the undertaking that has been given to provide economic resources to that centre. The centre is fairly new and therefore is still getting on its feet in terms of being able to attract enough income from sales of tickets and so on. It is at a fairly tentative stage of its evolution. I hope that the Minister can outline in some detail and commit to writing in the near future the precise nature of the resources that will be made available. It is all very well to talk about things like that occurring on trust but, given the budget cuts that have been savagely inflicted by the Federal Government and the failure of this Government to detail the specific purpose payment effect, we would like something in writing.

Clause 18 provides that assets will vest in the university. There is some saving in that it is stated that the assets will be held and used for purposes that are purposes of the campus. I seek some further clarification of that. I am confident in the ability of the Kalgoorlie Campus Council to ensure that the wording of that clause is upheld. However, having said that, there are some concerns given the large number of assets currently held.

Concerns have also been expressed about the council's being held subject to the directions of the Curtin University Council. I query the necessity to state that the Kalgoorlie Campus shall comply with any direction given to it by the council. Having said that, when weighing up the benefit one must look to the Vocational Education and Training Bill and the problems that have been debated in this place about lack of autonomy of the other independent colleges. I reiterate that I am confident that the Kalgoorlie Campus Council will be able to uphold the interests of the goldfields. The membership of the steering committee currently in place comprises excellent people. They have all worked hard to ensure that the university college has progressed. If one looks at the calibre of people on the college council and on the Western Australian School of Mines board in the past, it appears that the campus council will be in good hands. I still query the need for the wording of proposed section 21L(2)(a).

I do not know whether the Minister has given much thought to the ongoing autonomy of the School of Mines and the college. Certainly, there are issues of attraction of staff via housing and attracting people to the region generally. It is clear that if one accepts the premise, and I know that not everyone does, that it is necessary to have a university college prior to the establishment of a university, and one is not too negative about the chances of doing that - I gave

the example of Townsville, which had only 60 000 people when the James Cook University was established - the real point is showing a commitment to regionalisation. For those reasons, it is extremely important that the matters raised by me and other speakers are clarified so that the public can have confidence in the future of regional education. I support the Bill.

MR AINSWORTH (Roe) [10.09 pm]: I wish to make a brief contribution to this debate from a slightly different perspective. The Bill before us deals with the amalgamation of the Western Australian School of Mines and the Kalgoorlie College. It is important to emphasise a little more than has been done by other speakers, in the Minister's second reading speech and in the Bill itself the fact that Esperance is an integral part of this - and a fairly important part from my perspective.

Esperance TAFE, as it used to be, joined with the Kalgoorlie College three or four years ago at the instigation of some of the Kalgoorlie College people. It also had strong support from community leaders in the Esperance area. The progress of the joining of TAFE with the independent Kalgoorlie College was even faster than expected. The Esperance community was certainly happy with the speed with which it took place. The benefits to Esperance, as the member for Kalgoorlie mentioned, have certainly been evident in the improved facilities and the number of available courses. The development of the facility has gone ahead very quickly, but it is still lagging behind some of the other colleges in the State on which a lot more money has been spent. Esperance was the poor relation for many years when it was attached to the TAFE college at Albany. The move to Kalgoorlie has certainly been beneficial. The university campus proposed in this Bill will benefit the Esperance region even further.

The member for Nollamara referred to the need for tertiary training in the goldfields region. He also referred to the need for a university campus in the goldfields area to take on the role of research. I agree with him. He mentioned research in mining, metallurgy and geology, the traditional areas of research which the Western Australian School of Mines, with its international reputation, would be expected to undertake in a university-type role. If members bear in mind that the campus includes Esperance, it would be reasonable to expect that, in the future, if the research activity were to take place, the range of research could include aquaculture and mariculture as well as agroforestry and renewable energy. Of course there is scope to research other industries. If courses, in addition to the research, were provided in these subjects, it would enhance the education and training opportunities available to the local residents. It would also attract people from outside the region. Esperance would be an outpost of that campus, and these people would be able to participate in the education, training and research programs which would be provided by the newly formed organisation as it develops.

It is very important that this proposal proceeds. A number of studies show that the retention and participation rates in higher education in the remote regional centres, which some members represent, are lower than they should be. The statistics for the central wheatbelt show that it has the lowest retention rate and university achievement in Australia. The retention rate for high school and the participation rate in higher education is one aspect of this Bill. More importantly, it is about keeping those students who are already involved in higher education in the region and their not being lost to the metropolitan area. If these people do not continue to reside in the metropolitan area, it is very rare for them to return to their home towns. These good young people, who are the foundation of the State's future, are lost from the communities from where they came. The expanded training opportunities in the region will assist in keeping the young people in the region and it will also attract other people to the region. It will make education and training available to not only the local people, but will, in itself, be an additional industry, as was referred to by the member for Kalgoorlie.

Another aspect of education which is referred to in the Minister's second reading speech is the suggestion that if all things go to plan, the Esperance tertiary education centre will be expanded in the form of the Esperance community college. It goes even further than that because it would be a joint arrangement between the Esperance tertiary education centre, the Esperance Senior High School and the residential college. It would provide a total education package which would streamline pathways to education and training from primary to tertiary education or from primary to technical and post-compulsory training. It is very important for the region and it will be a first in Western Australia if it takes place. The only comparable organisation in Australia I am aware of is at Coffs Harbour in New South Wales.

As this new structure takes place it is vitally important that there be local input into course profiles. The Esperance tertiary education centre would remain a part of a university campus which has its roots in the Curtin University in Bentley. It is vitally important that the course profiles and the general development of the regional campus has a great deal of local input and is not directed by Bentley. If that were to be the case, the benefit of these changes would be lost.

It is also important for the representation on the Kalgoorlie Campus Council to be balanced. I am pleased that in the Minister's second reading speech and in the Bill emphasis has been placed on that aspect. The Bill states, in proposed section 21M(2), that the Minister will endeavour to ensure that at least one of the persons appointed under proposed subsection (1)(b) is a resident of the Esperance region. Given the connection between Esperance and Kalgoorlie, it is vital that occurs. One would expect this Minister will make absolutely certain that there is

representation from both areas so that the Esperance community does not feel as though it has been left out and is dominated by Kalgoorlie. It certainly was not the case in the discussions which took place between the Kalgoorlie College and the Esperance tertiary education centre. The cooperation which occurred between the two communities on that occasion has been evident also in the discussions on the university campus. If the facility is to be a success, it is important that this cooperation continues.

The member for South Perth made a few comments with which I agree. He said that the emphasis on universities is a little overdone and that university education per se does not necessarily imply that one is better educated because one has attended a tertiary or training institution which has the word "university" in its title. I agree with him, but we are debating a Bill which is specific to a university campus and it does not mean that it is in any way inferior. It is an initial step and it does not mean that the university college will always be attached to a Perth university. It is the first step towards a stand alone regional university, separate from Curtin University. Although it may retain the title of "university", it will be an institution which will differ from the traditional universities. The connection with what used to be a TAFE institution in Esperance, which is attaching itself more closely to and cooperating more closely with the high school and the residential college, could mean that there will be a new type of institution in the region which provides more than the traditional university-type courses and incorporates the more traditional training areas of TAFE. It will have a direct link with the high school and the post-compulsory students who have not completed high school and are not tertiary bound. They would be linked into the overall education facility in the eastern goldfields-Esperance region.

It is a great opportunity to be the first of a new type of educational facility which will not strictly be the traditional model of university which we are so used to, but which will provide not only the tertiary facilities that traditional universities provide, but also a more comprehensive and more appropriate range of education, training and research facilities on a regional basis that I believe can be a model for the rest of Western Australia for years to come. I support the Bill. It is a very small step on the way to having something much greater and much better for the people of the eastern goldfields-Esperance region.

MR D.L. SMITH (Mitchell) [10.32 pm]: I, like the member for South Perth, have a number of reservations about the proposal. I am fearful that the model that is being adopted at Kalgoorlie is a forerunner to what may happen to South West Regional College of TAFE and the Bunbury campus of the Edith Cowan University. I have always opposed the amalgamation of those two institutions. I will not let this Bill pass without expressing some of the reasons for my fears about these proposals. As the Minister indicated in his second reading speech, the Kalgoorlie college and the Western Australian School of Mines have distinct missions. He also said that those institutions had been successful operations in the past. Why interfere with two organisations that have distinct missions and which have been successful in the past? The Minister gave two reasons. The first of those concerns me; that is, as a combined institution there will be opportunities to achieve economies of scale and the sharing of resources which will enable the resulting savings to be applied to meeting the increasing and diverse education and training needs of the whole region. One of the foremost reasons for this change, in the view of the Minister, is that, by combining them, money will be saved and the resources required to deliver services will be reduced, and through that there will be more money and more resources to provide an increased number of courses. We know that when state and federal Liberal Party Governments talk about making changes in regional Western Australia to save money and say they will apply those savings to new services, it is time to lock up and shut them out.

Mr Trenorden: You did the same with health in your time. You were trying to shut our hospitals in the late 1980s.

Mr D.L. SMITH: I am concerned about 1996 and what is possible under these arrangements. Too often, we suffer the pain of the cutback in resources and amalgamations and do not get any of the benefits that are expected to flow from that.

Mr Prince interjected.

Mr D.L. SMITH: Princess Margaret Hospital is not in a regional area. We do not have children's hospitals in regional Western Australia. Most parts of Western Australia are lucky to have paediatric wards.

Mr Prince: I pointed to an example that contradicts what you said.

Mr D.L. SMITH: It does not contradict in terms of the country experience. In the case of amalgamations of hospitals, there are similar missions. There are three distinct missions in a college of vocational education and training, a university and a school of mines. How successful these things will be will depend on what is the relative ownership of the assets in the blended model and what is the relative decision making power base. If it gets to a situation where the Perth based university gets all the assets and all the control, the outcomes will not be what we want them to be. In the case of vocational education and a university, for instance, if in a time of reducing resources, both are looking for growth in student numbers and in new courses, who will decide the priorities? The great fear whenever any of these amalgamations are posed always is that when the universities take control of vocational education, the savings are found in vocational education and the new money goes to the university side of education and training. In this case, what is driving the support for this proposal from the Kalgoorlie end is the belief

encouraged by some experts that if we amalgamate the TAFE side and the School of Mines, we will get a stronger institution and from that stronger institution it will be able to progress to being an independent university. What is not explained is how that is done when Australia wide the Federal Government is trying to discourage the establishment of new universities. The truth is that it is most unlikely that by taking over vocational education and training subjects, it will add weight to the numbers required in the total student body for the institution to establish itself as a university.

Although it may be true that in the past some regional colleges and some colleges of advanced education have become universities, it is most unlikely that any of these amalgamations will lead to autonomous bodies based in a country region becoming universities in their own right under current policies. I would have grave reservations about any proposal for Edith Cowan University to take over South West College or South West College and Edith Cowan University combining and moving away from Edith Cowan University in Perth, to improve the vocational and education training opportunities and university training opportunities. The missions are very distinct and there should be separate decision makers and protectors looking after each of them and being directly interested in that sector and mission and not being influenced by the need to satisfy someone else's mission.

There is a third factor for consideration in this amalgamation; that is, that the School of Mines is important not only to Kalgoorlie and to Curtin University but also to all of regional Western Australia. I would like someone to explain how amalgamating the School of Mines with Curtin University will enhance for instance the prospect of mining type courses being provided at Bunbury or Collie. There have been halfhearted attempts, both under the previous Government and under this Government, to provide some mining courses at Collie, because the south west produces one-fifth of the mineral wealth of this State and it badly needs mining courses. However, is there any hint that somehow, by amalgamating the School of Mines with Curtin University and investing the assets in Curtin University, this combined institution will be more interested in establishing regional outreaches, especially regional outreaches in those towns and communities where there is already a university campus such as in Bunbury, but a university campus other than Curtin University? Will the Curtin University really be interested in developing at Edith Cowan in Bunbury mining courses of a university standard? The truth is of course that at a time of reducing resources Curtin University is more likely to look after its own institutions in Perth and Kalgoorlie and to have second regard for the outreach to Bunbury and Port Hedland and the other centres around Western Australia that need a better standard of and access to mining education courses.

On top of that we are all aware of the paper put out recently by the Chamber of Mines and Energy on mining education in Western Australia. I was horrified - I have drafted a letter to the people who prepared that report - that it contains no profile of the skills required in the mining industry and how we provide those across the whole of Western Australia. Almost no mention is made of any regional area outside Kalgoorlie concerning future mining education. More importantly, in summary that report focuses on the need for a mining faculty of excellence in Western Australia. It argues that a much higher class of further mining education in Western Australia is required. If we are serious about promoting ourselves as leaders in the world in the mining industry, we need an educational institution of excellence in Western Australia that will provide courses, particularly post graduate courses, which are essential in fulfilling that need. Clearly, if one reads between the lines, the expectation is not that that post graduate school of excellence will be based in Kalgoorlie, but rather that it will be based in Perth. As far as I can see University of Western Australia geology courses do not crack a mention in the report. It is obvious that it is the intention to place that post graduate faculty of excellence at Curtin University in Perth. That will take substantial resources. It will also mean that the focus of Western Australian mining education will shift from the Kalgoorlie School of Mines to the new post graduate course of excellence at Curtin.

The school of excellence will need huge resources and will draw some of those from the existing institution. As it develops a better reputation and standing because of its post graduate school of excellence, people will regard it as the pre-eminent school for mining education in Western Australia. I very much fear that the outcome of what we are proposing here will be a post graduate school of mining excellence at Curtin and progressively the Kalgoorlie School of Mines becoming a feeder college to that school of excellence. However, in the process of focusing on the need for that post graduate school of excellence with an international reputation there will be no focus on Bunbury, Geraldton, Karratha, Port Hedland, Kununurra or the other places throughout Western Australia where we need outreaches for mining education.

Mr Prince: Try Albany.

Mr D.L. SMITH: Not too much mining is done at Albany, but I accept the need for at least mining education to be there so that people in Albany could choose a mining career if they wished.

Mr Prince: There is sand mining in Albany.

Mr D.L. SMITH: In these situations we get mixed aspirations. In the long term the local community of Kalgoorlie wants to establish its own independent university and it sees the amalgamation with the TAFE college as the path by which it can achieve that. There are the aspirations of Esperance which wants a better system of vocational education

and training and there is Curtin with its long-term aspirations, apparently supported by the Chamber of Mines, to have a post graduate school of excellence in mining based in Perth.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I do not think the emphasis is entirely on post graduate.

Mr D.L. SMITH: It would worry me even more if the focus were on under graduate and post graduate schools of excellence at Curtin in Perth because that would rapidly undermine the situation in Kalgoorlie.

The Opposition has decided to support this legislation because that seems to be the view of the Kalgoorlie members of what is best for Kalgoorlie. They have explained why they see that as so. I hope all those aspirations in the Kalgoorlie community and the mining industry are fulfilled. However, I very much fear that in trying to combine different missions and aspirations when some are city based, and others are Kalgoorlie and Esperance based we will get into trouble; not least of which is that funding and control of the policy involved in vocational education and training and university education is quite separate. Apart from making sure there is a balance in the decision making system in an institution to ensure that all missions are accomplished and given equal weight, when funding is being provided by the tertiary sector under the university system or by vocational education and training under the new legislation before the House, it is likely that each will say the primary responsibility for capital or recurrent funding should be on the other. The vocational education people will say it should be on the university side, and eventually, neither will take responsibility for increased demand and resources. Effectively the hybrid organisation will fall between the two and will not be looked after by either funding provider.

As I said, support for this Bill requires a great degree of trust. In Bunbury the proposal was to amalgamate the Bunbury University campus with the college and break away from Edith Cowan University. Although this would involve the Bunbury campus going back to being a university college or regional college only, it thought it could grow from that to a university more quickly than at present because it would have local control over the courses. In this model there is not even that degree of local control. Why give up a university campus and a south west college in Bunbury which have different missions and are approaching their tasks in different ways to get a hybrid which may not be successful? My real worry with this legislation we are debating here is that we will develop a hybrid that does not really fit but where the ultimate control will be with Curtin University. It will depend on the vice-chancellor of that university whether Kalgoorlie is a winner as a result of that amalgamation.

Under the previous Chancellor of Edith Cowan University, Bunbury received a poor deal with the control of the university campus being in Perth. At least under the current chancellor, who unfortunately has announced his retirement, we have had a good deal of or at least an opportunity to have free and open discussions and to be listened to. We have not always achieved what we wanted but at least we are seeing some student growth, and so on. In the end, all my worries may dissolve; perhaps the commitments given in relation to this legislation will be honoured because we will have the right personnel in the institutions to ensure that they are honoured. However, I have serious reservations that because of the different missions involved, this hybrid organisation will not satisfy the aspirations of the Kalgoorlie community, or the aspirations and needs of mining education outside Kalgoorlie and Perth, around regional Western Australia. It will not satisfy the vocational, educational and training needs because they will become secondary to the requirements of the mining industry and Curtin University. Effectively the control of the new hybrid organisation will be with Curtin University and mining education will, like everything else, be centred here in Perth.

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe - Minister for Education) [10.51 pm]: I thank members on both sides for their support of the Bill. It is important in establishing a university campus at Kalgoorlie through the merger of the WA School of Mines and the Kalgoorlie College. Members have canvassed all the issues. I will make some general comments rather than go through the debate again.

I am very conscious of the strength of feeling within Kalgoorlie, the pride that community has, and the history and tradition of the School of Mines. The model reflected in this legislation not only creates a university campus through the merger of the two institutions; but also attaches it to a major university, while retaining a high level of self-management and autonomy. It is a good and sensible compromise. Time will prove whether that is the case. I note the comments of members opposite in that regard.

A number of comments were made about the general direction of tertiary education in this State. A lot of discussion has occurred over recent months between the vice chancellors. I have been a party to some of those discussions, but not all. For a State of this size and population to have four public universities and one private university is probably not sustainable in the longer term. Universities face increasing competition. Reference was made to competition in gaining students from offshore. Equally, the universities in Australia will compete more intensely with each other, but some of the major European and North American universities will be far more active, competing in the Asian and Australian marketplaces. One of the keys for universities in future will be to have not only a range of programs but also quality of programs to deliver to students at a competitive cost. We must question whether small universities will be able to meet the three criteria. That will be an issue for universities.

I do not think that anyone has a fixed view about what will happen in this State. There has been some speculation about Murdoch and Curtin Universities merging, and Murdoch, Curtin and Edith Cowan Universities merging. There has been speculation about some sort of long term association between UWA and Edith Cowan University. All sorts of scenarios are possible. However, it is a unique circumstance that at least the debate is being held. Sure, the debate was provoked by speculation about cutbacks in tertiary funding through the Commonwealth Government. That has brought about a very refreshing attitude among the vice chancellors and the chancellors in the respective councils to look at the universities and where they might be not just next year but in 10, 15 or 20 years. There will be no rushed or sudden decision. I am reasonably optimistic that we might see, if not mergers, certainly far closer cooperation and a sharing of facilities, with perhaps some universities opting out of some disciplines and others developing them. We must have substantial numbers and high quality academic staff, as well as top class facilities, to compete in future and to provide quality education.

The WA School of Mines has a very proud tradition. It has many supporters including former students and companies operating in the area. However, the mining industry in this State has gone far beyond the interests of gold mining and, to a lesser extent, nickel mining. It is not uncommon for people in other areas of mining, particularly iron ore and the petroleum sector, to say that they need to go outside Australia to find top people in those areas. That is not an adverse reflection on the WA School of Mines. I just pose the question: Where do we find petroleum and iron ore people, and where will the metallurgists come from? We are not producing them in sufficient numbers or with the educational background that the industry requires. That is the reality. The mining industry indicates that, and within the mining industry there will be differing views.

Another aspect is that while mining is very strong in this State, and will be for decades, it is declining dramatically in western Europe. It is declining in North America, and the Colorado School of Mines does not have the stature it had in the past. Therefore, we have a great opportunity in Western Australia for mining education to develop strongly - not only for the resources sector in this State and in Australia, but also to provide the mining engineers and geologists to work in third world nations which do not have mining schools. Much of the mining is developing in South America and parts of Asia and in some of the developing nations in Africa.

Mr D.L. Smith interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I will get to that point. A big market here is feeling somewhat unserved. There is a growing market in developing nations and a declining provision in areas such as the London and Colorado schools. To provide mining education, in a general sense, in the future will be more sophisticated than anyone in the mining industry can realistically see being totally provided in a place such as Kalgoorlie, in a relatively small campus in a relatively small community. Mining education will not be the discipline as it was taught. For example, if we are to educate people who will be good in the petroleum sector, they need to know about mining and learn about the geology side, but they must also have the very best of education in physics. We will need the laboratories, the research and the academic staff, because petroleum now is all about three-dimensional seismic work. They must know chemistry and other areas. If we are to be a world leader in mining and petroleum education we must be extremely sophisticated about it. The collaborative model between universities has not evolved, but it is in the first stage of doing so. We must stop some of the duplication in particular disciplines, and draw on the best in chemistry, physics, geology and so on. It will probably be established at the Bentley campus and will probably have a physical presence. Whether it will be called the Australian or national institute of mining or petroleum, or whatever, the objective will be to have an absolute international leader in mining and petroleum education. It could be seen as a threat to Kalgoorlie and the WA School of Mines. Everyone is conscious of that and it has been taken into account. I am optimistic in that regard.

That new entity incorporating the WA School of Mines and having a campus - effectively a working laboratory in the mining area - is what will make this model unique. The concept is that a student, for example, will do a geology degree at UWA but attached to the degree he will be a graduate of, say, the Australian Institute of Mining and Petroleum. The student will not only study perhaps geology at the Crawley campus but also he will undertake field work and have perhaps two to three semesters based at Kalgoorlie. The mining industry is saying that on the one hand it requires the best possible education - and that means large facilities and campuses, but on the other hand it wants to employ graduates who have had field experience and know what it is like to live in a mining centre.

It is no good plucking these kids out of safe suburban environments and sending them out to remote minesites where they do not cope socially or emotionally. The institutions want to harden them up, in a sense, and use them there. It is also seen as a great opportunity to use the Kalgoorlie campus in areas of study that have often been neglected in traditional mining education. The more practical side of mining and what the mining industry wants to see from geologists and metallurgists - issues such as rehabilitation, management aspects of mining, financial analysis of projects, and native title, and managing negotiations on those issues - can best be delivered in a practical sense, in the field in Kalgoorlie. An enormous amount of work must be done. However, people from all sides are looking cooperatively at that. To their credit and to the credit of the mining industry everyone is focusing on becoming world leaders in mining and petroleum education and producing the best graduates, both for here and offshore.

Everyone is having to suffer a little jealousy. Members can imagine the University of Western Australia and Curtin University of Technology both competing in various areas. I am incredibly impressed that people from what could be self-interest positions are putting that to one side and looking at the big picture. A similar thing will probably occur in the agricultural sector where the same problems occur.

This is good legislation. The Western Australian School of Mines will be a big part of it.

Mr D.L. Smith: What about in the untraditional mining centres such as Bunbury, Port Hedland and Geraldton?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Mining education will not be spread all over the State. Institutions in those centres would not be able to compete with the quality of education in the other centres. The opportunity may exist to do parts of such courses in those centres, but there will not be a mining university course in Collie or Bunbury. Perhaps something else, such as agriculture, could be addressed in those areas.

Mr D.L. Smith interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It may well be; it is in the Pilbara, and it may be in the Kimberley in the future. The biggest mining industry in the State was off the north west coast of Western Australia. Therefore, it could be asked: Why not do it in Karratha? We could go on and on. If we are to be serious and are to be world leaders in mining and petroleum, we must concentrate our assets and do it best. The State cannot scatter them all over the place, otherwise there will be pieces here and there and we will not be the world leaders. It would not work. Like me, the member for Mitchell has benefited from a university education. He knows how it works and how quality matters.

The argument has been tossed around: The point is to do it best. If a superb facility in Perth incorporates the Western Australian School of Mines, the kids in the south west will not want to study here; they will want to be part of the school. Perhaps parts of subjects could be delivered in that region, involving the campus.

Mr D.L. Smith: The mining industry is our biggest industry.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I will not pursue this because the member will argue the local electorate theme; that is fine. However, the debate will not be at that level. The debate and the people of Kalgoorlie have lifted above that. We can have that argument another day. I do not mind those views being expressed, but the debate is quickly going beyond that.

Mr D.L. Smith: The Government is not addressing the hands-on skills of people either.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: If the member is talking about technical and further education-type courses, I agree with him.

Mr D.L. Smith: I am talking about undergraduate courses.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: If the member is talking about institutions for undergraduate and postgraduate mining professionals with university qualifications, that will not occur in several centres across the State. It will happen in a Perth centre with a Kalgoorlie campus. That is as far as this State will get in the next 20 years.

Mr D.L. Smith: What about modern technology and communications?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It is a waste of time discussing this, because if we go down that path there will be scatters of education across the State and Western Australia will not have world class education, in that field or in nursing and many other areas. Different areas of the State will have different opportunities.

Questions were raised about the size of the Curtin University council. That council will have 20 members if the chancellor is elected from outside the membership of the council, as occurs at present. The academic board proposes that with the inclusion of the chair there could be 21 members. The Goldfields Arts Centre was raised as an issue. That centre and other assets have been issues in Kalgoorlie. The Goldfields Arts Centre was built on Kalgoorlie College's land. It was provided by the State Government as a gift to the people of Kalgoorlie-Boulder for their centenary. The Government will meet its obligations to that and will take responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of that facility. The people of Kalgoorlie can rest assured that there is no sense of running away from that asset. That provides an integral part of the project.

Mr Kobelke: Is that a long term commitment?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: That is right. Questions were raised about dealings in property. I was confused by that as well. I am advised that at present the Act allows the university to deal in property, but not to sell property it has bought. This was an oversight in the original legislation and the amendments in this Bill will bring Curtin into line with the other universities so that it can buy and sell property in the normal way. Some of the property was effectively split between the Land Act and the Curtin University of Technology Act and created unnecessary confusion.

Questions about annual reports were raised. All universities are required to produce annual reports. The change means that although they will report on the individual activities of the Muresk Institute of Agriculture and the School of Mines, those institutions will not be required to produce their own separate reports. However, within the report

of the Curtin University, for example, will be the report on the operations in Kalgoorlie. Whether it chooses to issue publications for its own promotion is up to Kalgoorlie. However, the Government will not require each part of the college to go through the process of producing separate reports. They will be reported on individually through the university's annual report.

Mr Kobelke: As I understand it, the Kalgoorlie Campus Council will be required under the amended legislation to provide a report to the Curtin council - not its own public report. Is there any legislative requirement for the Muresk campus, or is it simply accepted that it will be a policy that it does so?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am not sure. I think it would be reported within the May overall report. If I were in charge of Muresk, I would issue a separate report for the promotion of Muresk. I am sure that will occur; however, the Government will not require full annual reports and their tabling from those campuses.

Mr Kobelke: There seems to be a small anomaly. As I read it, the current legislation requires the Kalgoorlie Campus Council to report; however, this Bill does not require the Muresk campus to do so.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The member is probably correct. That would reflect the high level of autonomy of the Kalgoorlie operation.

Mr Kobelke: What about the Esperance college?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am conscious that the member for Roe mentioned the representation for that. The campus in Kalgoorlie must service the broader Kalgoorlie-goldfields area, and Esperance must be a part of that. At the same time the proposal for the community college in Esperance is proceeding, and a planning exercise to that effect is being undertaken, involving the school and the TAFE sector, and perhaps a combined resource centre involving local government. A fair amount of work must be done on that. I am not sure of the exact amount, but a certain amount of money has been expended on that planning process.

Mr Kobelke: Planning is under way?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes, studies are being undertaken at the moment. I thank members opposite for their support of the Bill. I sincerely hope that it proves to be a great success and that we will see tertiary education thrive in the goldfields.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time, proceeded through remaining stages without debate and transmitted to the Council.

COMPETITION POLICY REFORM (WESTERN AUSTRALIA) BILL

Cognate Debate

On motion by Mr C.J. Barnett (Leader of the House), resolved -

That leave be granted for a cognate debate for the Competition Policy Reform (Western Australia) Bill and the Competition Policy Reform (Taxing) Bill, and that the Competition Policy Reform (Western Australia) Bill be the principal Bill.

Second Reading

Resumed from 27 June.

DR GALLOP (Victoria Park - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [11.09 pm]: We are debating tonight the Competition Policy Reform (Western Australia) Bill and the Competition Policy Reform (Taxing) Bill, both of which deal with the application to Western Australia of conditions of the nationally agreed competition reform policy.

[Leave granted for speech to be continued.]

Debate thus adjourned.

BILLS (4) - RECEIPT AND FIRST READING

1. Transfer of Land Amendment Bill
2. National Environment Protection Council (Western Australia) Bill
3. Sandalwood Amendment Bill
4. Government Railways Amendment Bill

Bills received from the Council; and, on motions by Mr C.J. Barnett (Leader of the House), read a first time.

House adjourned at 11.12 pm

APPENDIX A**YEARS OF FULL-TIME PRIMARY SCHOOLING**

	Pre-Comp- ulsory	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
NSW	Pre-school	Kindergarten 5 by 31 July	1	2	3	4	5	6
VIC	Pre-school	Preparatory 5 by 30 April	1	2	3	4	5	6
QLD	Pre-school	Year 1 6 by 31 Dec	2	3	4	5	6	7
WA	Pre-primary	Year 1 6 by 31 Dec	2	3	4	5	6	7
SA	Reception #1	Year 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
TAS	Kindergarten	Preparatory 5 by 1 Jan #2	1	2	3	4	5	6
ACT	Pre-school	Kindergarten 5 by 30 April	1	2	3	4	5	6
NT	Transition #3	Year 1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1 Continuous entry after turning 5 (Time spent varies from 2 to 6 months)

2 Not compulsory

3 5 by 30 June, but may enter after fifth birthday

Taken from the Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee Report July 1996

CHILDHOOD MATTERS The report on the inquiry into early childhood education.

APPENDIX B

State	Minimum Entry Age to School	Enrolment Procedure	Years of Schooling
ACT	6 years by 30 April	Single entry at beginning of year	13
VIC	6 years by 30 April	Single entry at beginning of year	13
NSW	6 years by 31 July	Single entry at beginning of year	13
QLD	6 years by 31 Dec	Single entry at beginning of year	12
WA	6 years by 31 Dec	Single entry at beginning of year	12
TAS	6 years by 1 Jan	2 points of entry at beginning of year	13
	6 years by 1 July of previous year	and mid year	
SA	6 years	Continuous entry, usually at beginning of term following fifth birthday	13
NT	6 years	Continuous entry, usually at beginning of term following fifth birthday	13

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT, DEPARTMENT OF - RHIND, SUSAN, CORRESPONDENCE TO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TABLING

1172. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister representing the Minister for Environment:

- (1) Will the Minister table correspondence from Susan Rhind to the Executive Director of CALM concerning CALM's recent criticism of her work?
- (2) If not, why not?

Mr MINSON replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply:

- (1) There has been no correspondence from Susan Rhind to the Executive Director of CALM. Ms Rhind has written to Departmental officers on six occasions regarding this matter.
- (2) No. The correspondence is regarded as confidential. I would not table it without Ms Rhind's agreement.

CONTRACTING OUT - GOVERNMENT SERVICES

1358. Mr BROWN to the Minister representing the Minister for the Arts:

- (1) Has any -
 - (a) department;
 - (b) agency,
under the Minister's control made any plans to contract out work to the private sector in the 1996-97 financial year?
- (2) Is any of the work proposed to be contracted out currently performed by government employees?
- (3) If so, exactly what work is proposed to be contracted out?
- (4) How many government employees' jobs in each department or agency will be affected?
- (5) Will any plans lead to a reduction in the number of employees in any department or agency?

Mr NICHOLLS replied:

The Minister for the Arts has provided the following reply:

- (1)-(5) The third annual survey of competitive tendering and contracting commenced in July, requiring agencies to report on contracts let during 1995/96. They will also be asked to again outline their plans for future contracting (ie for the 1996/97 financial year) and, where the activity is currently performed in-house, to identify the number of staff currently working in the relevant service area. Once the survey is undertaken and the independent analysis is completed, the ensuing report will be widely distributed. As has occurred in the course of past contracting decisions, there is likely to be a reduction in the number of public sector employees, as staff elect to transfer to private sector contracts, or they accept redundancy payments in accordance with approved packages. Despite the magnitude of change in the public sector, associated with CTC and other best practice management initiatives, there are currently only 358 employees actively seeking placement through redeployment.

Significantly, the Federal Government's Industry Commission recently stated (in its final report on competitive tendering and contracting in public sectors across Australia) that CTC is expected to generate higher real income and some increase in overall employment. With average savings of 20% and 24% reported in Western Australia in two previous surveys - and in light of the fact that for every public sector job "lost" in this State since February 1993 there have been 12 private sector jobs created - the Government remains committed to the continued implementation of competitive tendering and contracting in departments and other agencies throughout the public sector. This will involve the progressive examination of many different areas of current "in-house" activity, as to their suitability for testing in the competitive market environment and the eventual selection of the best value-for-money options for service delivery.

CONTRACTING OUT - GOVERNMENT SERVICES

1359. Mr BROWN to the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) Has any -
 (a) department;
 (b) agency,
 under the Minister's control made any plans to contract out work to the private sector in the 1996-97 financial year?
- (2) Is any of the work proposed to be contracted out currently performed by government employees?
- (3) If so, exactly what work is proposed to be contracted out?
- (4) How many government employees' jobs in each department or agency will be affected?
- (5) Will any plans lead to a reduction in the number of employees in any department or agency?

Mr MINSON replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply:

- (1-5) The third annual survey of competitive tendering and contracting commenced in July, requiring agencies to report on contracts let during 1995-96. They will also be asked to again outline their plans for future contracting (ie for the 1996-97 financial year) and, where the activity is currently performed in-house, to identify the number of staff currently working in the relevant service area. Once the survey is undertaken and the independent analysis is completed, the ensuing report will be widely distributed. As has occurred in the course of past contracting decisions, there is likely to be a reduction in the number of public sector employees, as staff elect to transfer to private sector contracts, or they accept redundancy payments in accordance with approved packages. Despite the magnitude of change in the public sector, associated with CTC and other best practice management initiatives, there are currently only 358 employees actively seeking placement through redeployment.

Significantly, the Federal Government's Industry Commission recently stated (in its final report on competitive tendering and contracting in public sectors across Australia) that CTC is expected to generate higher real income and some increase in overall employment. With average savings of 20 per cent and 24 per cent reported in Western Australia in two previous surveys - and in light of the fact that for every public sector job "lost" in this State since February 1993 there have been 12 private sector jobs created - the Government remains committed to the continued implementation of competitive tendering and contracting in departments and other agencies throughout the public sector. This will involve the progressive examination of many different areas of current "in-house" activity, as to their suitability for testing in the competitive market environment and the eventual selection of the best value-for-money options for service delivery.

CONTRACTING OUT - GOVERNMENT SERVICES

1361. Mr BROWN to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

- (1) Has any -
 (a) department;
 (b) agency,
 under the Minister's control made any plans to contract out work to the private sector in the 1996-97 financial year?
- (2) Is any of the work proposed to be contracted out currently performed by government employees?
- (3) If so, exactly what work is proposed to be contracted out?
- (4) How many government employees' jobs in each department or agency will be affected?
- (5) Will any plans lead to a reduction in the number of employees in any department or agency?

Mr PRINCE replied:

The Attorney General has provided the following reply:

- (1-5) The third annual survey of competitive tendering and contracting commenced in July, requiring agencies to report on contracts let during 1995-96. They will also be asked to again outline their plans for future contracting (ie for the 1996-97 financial year) and, where the activity is currently

performed in-house, to identify the number of staff currently working in the relevant service area. Once the survey is undertaken and the independent analysis is completed, the ensuing report will be widely distributed. As has occurred in the course of past contracting decisions, there is likely to be a reduction in the number of public sector employees, as staff elect to transfer to private sector contracts, or they accept redundancy payments in accordance with approved packages. Despite the magnitude of change in the public sector, associated with CTC and other best practice management initiatives, there are currently only 358 employees actively seeking placement through redeployment.

Significantly, the Federal Government's Industry Commission recently stated (in its final report on competitive tendering and contracting in public sectors across Australia) that CTC is expected to generate higher real income and some increase in overall employment. With average savings of 20 per cent and 24 per cent reported in Western Australia in two previous surveys - and in light of the fact that for every public sector job "lost" in this State since February 1993 there have been 12 private sector jobs created - the Government remains committed to the continued implementation of competitive tendering and contracting in departments and other agencies throughout the public sector. This will involve the progressive examination of many different areas of current "in-house" activity, as to their suitability for testing in the competitive market environment and the eventual selection of the best value-for-money options for service delivery.

STEPHENSON AND WARD INCINERATOR - WELSHPOOL SITE, GROUND WATER
CONTAMINATED BY PCBs

1374. Dr WATSON to the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) Has the Minister read the report in the *Canning Community* of 18 June 1996, headed "Nasty Chemical Found in Water"?
- (2) What does it mean that "most of the groundwater" at the site has been contaminated by PCB?
- (3) Why was adequate testing of ground water not done in the first place?
- (4) What information has been given to the local community above the contamination?
- (5) When will further sampling be undertaken?
- (6) When will tenders for decontamination be called?
- (7) What will the likely cost be?
- (8) Why has there been a consistent cover up of test results and a reluctance to do full testing at this site?
- (9) At what level have dioxins been detected -
 - (a) in the ground water;
 - (b) in incinerator emissions?

Mr MINSON replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply:

- (1) I have had the report drawn to my attention as a result of this question.
- (2) The term "most of the groundwater under the site" was employed by the journalist who wrote the article and you should therefore direct this question to her. I am advised by the staff in the Department of Environmental Protection that the results from an extensive program of drilling have revealed that ground water in several locations on the site is contaminated with very low levels of PCBs. The large majority of bores on the property are in fact not contaminated with PCBs.
- (3) The question incorrectly assumes there was not adequate testing. The current site investigations were instituted to determine the full extent of contamination after initial tests confirmed the presence of PCBs, and to aid in preparing a detailed remediation strategy.
- (4) The results of the previous monitoring program have been provided to a local community action group and were announced publicly. A community liaison committee has been established and is provided with all information as it becomes available. The final report on current site investigations is not expected to be completed until late July and as soon as it is complete it will be made publicly available. I am advised that the community liaison committee will be provided

with copies of the report and be fully briefed by the Department and the consultant performing the site investigations.

- (5) I am advised that additional monitoring bores are being established now and drilling of these bores and sampling should be completed by mid July 1996.
- (6) Tenders for remediation of the site will be called once site investigations have been completed and a remediation strategy has been developed and assessed by the Environmental Protection Authority (so as to include any specific requirements emanating from the assessment).
- (7) It is not possible to estimate the cost at this time.
- (8) This question is quite improper and wrong. It states the reverse of what is the truth. There has been no cover up of results. All results have been made publicly available as soon as site investigations have been completed and reports have been finalised. In the case of the article referred to by the honourable member, the journalist asked for a progress report and was given information verbally. The inaccurate and sensational nature of the reporting only confirms the view that it may be preferable to wait until the full report can be published, although the Government will continue with its policy of making the available information public at all times.
- (9)
 - (a) I am advised that no tests have been conducted to determine the level of dioxin contamination in the ground water because dioxins are formed during the combustion process and are therefore of concern in the air environment.
 - (b) The air emissions for the incinerator have been fully assessed and comply with emission limits for all parameters.

PERTH PHOTOCHEMICAL SMOG STUDY - RELEASE DATE

1388. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) Has work on the Perth Photochemical Smog Study been finalised?
- (2) Has the study been signed by the Minister?
- (3) Has the study been printed for distribution?
- (4) What is the reason for the current delay in the release of the study?
- (5) When will the study be released?

Mr MINSON replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) The Environmental Protection Authority has assessed and approved the Perth Photochemical Smog Study. The corresponding Report does not require my signature.
- (3) I have been advised that the Perth Photochemical Smog Study Report has been printed and is ready for distribution.
- (4) The information is already in the public domain as it has been released as it became available. The printed report will be released at a suitable time in conjunction with options for further actions to address photochemical smog in light of the findings of the Perth Photochemical Smog Study.
- (5) I expect that the Perth Photochemical Smog Study Report will be released at the earliest opportunity.

CONTRACTING OUT - GOVERNMENT SERVICES

1407. Dr GALLOP to the Minister representing the Minister for the Arts:

- (1) Since 1993, what services have been contracted out by individual agencies within the Attorney General's portfolio and what is the total cost of those contracts for each year?
- (2) What are the names of the companies that have received contracts in the 1995-97 financial year?
- (3) What is the value of each contract in excess of \$50 000?
- (4) In relation to (3) above, what is the demonstrated saving of each service contracted out?

- (5) In relation to (3) above, does the contractor have access to , or use of, any government services or facilities in the performance of the contract?
- (6) If so, what are they?

Mr NICHOLLS replied:

- (1)-(6) Government agencies routinely contract external providers to undertake a range of services in support of the delivery of their programs. Given the large number of contractual arrangements in place at any time the details sought are not readily available. I am not prepared to direct considerable resources to obtain this information. However, if the member has a specific query I will have the matter investigated.

CONTRACTING OUT - GOVERNMENT SERVICES

1408. Dr GALLOP to the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) Since 1993, what services have been contracted out by individual agencies within the Minister's portfolio and what is the total cost of those contracts for each year?
- (2) What are the names of the companies that have received contracts in the 1995-96 financial year?
- (3) What is the value of each contract in excess of \$50 000?
- (4) In relation to (3) above, what is the demonstrated saving of each service contracted out?
- (5) In relation to (3) above, does the contractor have access to , or use of, any government services or facilities in the performance of the contract?
- (6) If so, what are they?

Mr MINSON replied:

- (1)-(6) Government agencies routinely contract external providers to undertake a range of services in support of the delivery of their programs. Given the large number of contractual arrangements in place at any time the details sought are not readily available. I am not prepared to direct considerable resources to obtain this information. However, if the member has a specific query I will have the matter investigated.

CONTRACTING OUT - GOVERNMENT SERVICES

1410. Dr GALLOP to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

- (1) Since 1993, what services have been contracted out by individual agencies within the Minister's portfolios and what is the total cost of those contracts for each year?
- (2) What are the names of the companies that have received contracts in the 1996-96 financial year?
- (3) What is the value of each contract in excess of \$50 000?
- (4) In relation to (3) above, what is the demonstrated saving of each service contracted out?
- (5) In relation to (3) above, does the contractor have access to, or use of, any government services or facilities in the performance of the contract?
- (6) If so, what are they?

Mr PRINCE replied:

- (1)-(6) Government agencies routinely contract external providers to undertake a range of services in support of the delivery of their programs. Given the large number of contractual arrangements in place at any time the details sought are not readily available. I am not prepared to direct considerable resources to obtain this information. However, if the member has a specific query I will have the matter investigated.

ADVERTISING - BUDGET; EXPENDITURE

1423. Dr GALLOP to the Minister for Primary Industry; Fisheries:

- (1) In 1996-97, what is the total advertising budget proposed for each individual agencies within the Minister's portfolios?

- (2) In the same year, what is the expected expenditure on campaign advertising and on non-campaign advertising?
- (3) In relation to campaign advertising -
 - (a) what is the expected expenditure for 1996-97 and how does that figure compare with the previous three financial years?
 - (b) if there has been an increase in allocation, how is that explained;
 - (c) what portion of the 1996-97 allocation will be spent on television, radio, print and other medium;
 - (d) in 1996-97, what electronic and/or print medium campaigns are planned in excess of \$50 000;
 - (e) have any of these campaigns been initiated by, or involved, any other agency or body;
 - (f) if yes, which agency or body?
- (4) In relation to non-campaign advertising -
 - (a) what is the expected expenditure for 1996-97 and how does that figure compare with the previous three financial years;
 - (b) what is the reason for the difference in figures?

Mr HOUSE replied:

- (1)-(4) Under the program budgeting format used throughout the public sector, expenditure is not budgeted for at the level of detail sought. I am not prepared to direct considerable resources to obtain the information requested.

ADVERTISING - BUDGET; EXPENDITURE

1424. Dr GALLOP to the Minister for Family and Children's Services; Seniors; Fair Trading; Women's Interests:

- (1) In 1996-97, what is the total advertising budget proposed for each individual agencies within these portfolios?
- (2) In the same year, what is the expected expenditure on campaign advertising and on non-campaign advertising?
- (3) In relation to campaign advertising -
 - (a) what is the expected expenditure for 1996-97 and how does that figure compare with the previous three financial years;
 - (b) if there has been an increase in allocation, how is that explained;
 - (c) what portion of the 1996-97 allocation will be spent on television, radio, print and other medium;
 - (d) in 1996-97, what electronic and/or print medium campaigns are planned in excess of \$50 000;
 - (e) have any of these campaigns been initiated by, or involved, any other agency or body;
 - (f) if yes, which agency or body?
- (4) In relation to non-campaign advertising -
 - (a) what is the expected expenditure for 1996-97 and how does that figure compare with the previous three financial years;
 - (b) what is the reason for the difference in figures?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

- (1)-(4) Under the program budgeting format used throughout the public sector, expenditure is not budgeted for at the level of detail sought. I am not prepared to direct considerable resources to obtain the information requested.

ADVERTISING - BUDGET; EXPENDITURE

1428. Dr GALLOP to the Minister for Planning; Heritage:

- (1) In 1996-97, what is the total advertising budget proposed for each individual agencies within these portfolios?
- (2) In the same year, what is the expected expenditure in campaign advertising and on non-campaign advertising?
- (3) In relation to campaign advertising -

- (a) what is the expected expenditure for 1996-97 and how does that figure compare with the previous three financial years;
 - (b) if there has been an increase in allocation, how is that explained;
 - (c) what portion of the 1996-97 allocation will be spent on television, radio, print and other medium;
 - (d) in 1996-97, what electronic and/or print medium campaigns are planned in excess of \$50 000;
 - (e) have any of these campaigns been initiated by, or involved, any other agency or body;
 - (f) if yes, which agency or body?
- (4) In relation to non-campaign advertising -
- (a) what is the expected expenditure for 1996-97 and how does that figure compare with the previous three financial years;
 - (b) what is the reason for the difference in figures?

Mr LEWIS replied:

- (1)-(4) Under the program budgeting format used throughout the public sector, expenditure is not budgeted for at the level of detail sought. I am not prepared to direct considerable resources to obtain the information requested.

PUBLICATIONS - VIDEOS; OPINION POLLS, ALLOCATIONS

1444. Dr GALLOP to the Minister for Primary Industry; Fisheries

- (1) In 1996-97, what is the proposed allocation for brochures, pamphlets and other similar publications for each individual agency within the Minister's portfolios?
- (2) What were the allocations for the previous three financial years?
- (3) In 1996-97, what is the proposed allocation for production of videos and similar publicity ventures?
- (4) What were the allocations for the previous three financial years?
- (5) In 1996-97, has any money been allocated for opinion polling?
- (6) If yes, what opinion polling is proposed and what will it cost?
- (7) What were the allocations for polling in the previous three financial years?

Mr HOUSE replied:

- (1)-(7) Under the program budgeting format used throughout the public sector, expenditure is not budgeted for at the level of detail sought. I am not prepared to direct considerable resources to obtain the information requested.

PUBLICATIONS - VIDEOS; OPINION POLLS, ALLOCATIONS

1445. Dr GALLOP to the Minister for Family and Children's Services; Seniors; Fair Trading; Women's Interests:

- (1) In 1996-97, what is the proposed allocation for brochures, pamphlets and other similar publications for each individual agencies within the Minister's portfolios?
- (2) What were the allocations for the previous three financial years?
- (3) In 1996-97, what is the proposed allocation for production of videos and similar publicity ventures?
- (4) What were the allocations for the previous three financial years?
- (5) In 1996-97, has any money been allocated for opinion polling?
- (6) If yes, what opinion polling is proposed and what will it cost?
- (7) What were the allocations for polling in the previous three financial years?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

- (1)-(7) Under the programme budgeting format used throughout the public sector, expenditure is not budgeted for at the level of detail sought. I am not prepared to direct considerable resources to obtain the information requested.

PUBLICATIONS - VIDEOS; OPINION POLLS, ALLOCATIONS

1449. Dr GALLOP to the Minister for Planning; Heritage:

- (1) In 1996-97, what is the proposed allocation for brochures, pamphlets and other similar publications for each individual agency within the Minister's portfolio?
- (2) What were the allocations for the previous three financial years?
- (3) In 1996-97 what is the proposed allocation for production of videos and similar publicity ventures?
- (4) What were the allocations for the previous three financial years?
- (5) In 1996-97, has any money been allocated for opinion polling?
- (6) If yes, what opinion polling is proposed and what will it cost?
- (7) What were the allocations for polling in the previous three financial years?

Mr LEWIS replied:

- (1)-(7) Under the program budgeting format used throughout the public sector, expenditure is not budgeted for at the level of detail sought. I am not prepared to direct considerable resources to obtain the information requested.

INCINERATORS - PCBs DISPOSAL, GOVERNMENT ADVICE; LEGAL LIABILITY

1558. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) Further to statements of 19 March 1996 by the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment, that the Government received advice that by encouraging incinerating firms to deal with polychlorinated biphenols, the Government was found to have a legal liability who provided this advice to the Government?
- (2) Was this formal legal advice, and if not, has the Government ever obtained formal legal advice on this point?
- (3) If yes, from whom was it obtained?
- (4) Which incinerator firms were encouraged by the Government to deal with PCBs?
- (5) (a) Which medical waste incinerators dispose of animal carcasses -
 - (i) from veterinary clinics;
 - (ii) other sources?
 (b) which landfills accept animal carcasses originating from veterinary clinics?

Mr MINSON replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply:

- (1)-(3) The member has misrepresented the stated reason for liability. My answer, made to the member's question on 19 March 1996, was intended to convey the notion that if the Government did not assist with the clean-up, it would very likely inherit the site as an orphan site and would therefore have full liability for any clean-up in the public interest. As it is, the operator of the site is contributing to the cost of the clean-up operation and in addition a piece of waste management infrastructure which is of some importance to Western Australia, is continuing in operation.
- (2)-(3) See answer in question (1).
- (4) This also seems to be based on a misapprehension. However, I am advised that the only incinerator ever used to destroy PCBs in Western Australia was the Stephenson and Ward Incinerator.
- (5) (a) I am advised that animal carcasses are incinerated in the Stephenson and Ward Incinerator (which is the only medical waste incinerator currently operating in Western Australia). However, I understand that the large majority of animal carcasses incinerated in Western Australia are in fact treated in specialised incinerators dealing with animal carcasses.
- (b) I am advised that any landfill gazetted under the Health Act can accept animal carcasses for disposal, provided they are managed correctly by immediate, supervised burial.

CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT, DEPARTMENT OF - WESTERN SHIELD PROGRAM,
COMMONWEALTH FUNDING

1562. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment:

Further to question on notice 987 of 1996, what indirect financial contribution is the Federal Government making to the Western shield program being undertaken by the Department of Conservation and Land Management for -

- (a) feral predator research;
- (b) feral predator control;
- (c) threatened species recovery programs;
- (d) other?

Mr MINSON replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following answer:

The Federal Government is not contributing any of the more than \$1.4m CALM has identified as its funding commitment for Western Shield for 1996/97. The Federal Government has contributed in the past and will hopefully contribute in the future to complementary programs for feral predator research, feral predator control and threatened species recovery. In the 1995/96 financial year the Australian Nature Conservation Agency provided approximately \$493 000 from its Feral Pests Program to CALM for feral pest control and research, including feral cat baiting and population monitoring research, and research into the control and ecology of the red fox, as well as other feral animal control actions in areas targeted for Western Shield.

ANCA also provided approximately \$290 000 in 1995/96 year from its Endangered Species Program to CALM for projects aimed at the recovery of species which will also benefit from Western Shield. In addition, the Cooperative Research Centre for Vertebrate Pest Biological Control provided funds to CALM totalling approximately \$244,000 in 1995/96 for studies on predator/prey relationships and fox population dynamics.

The ANCA Feral Pests Program provision to CALM in 1995/96 included within the total of \$493,000 an amount of \$96,950 received on 25 June 1996 for expansion of Western Shield in areas of high fauna priority in relation to the possible impacts of Rabbit Calicivirus Disease. This money is additional to that provided by CALM and will provide for increased baiting intensity in key fauna habitat areas in order to safeguard those fauna populations from the possibility of temporarily increased levels of fox predation as rabbit numbers decline through RCD. CALM is continuing with efforts to attract additional funding from the Federal Government to further assist Western Shield

CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT, DEPARTMENT OF - BICENTENNIAL TREE,
OFFICIAL OPENING

1563. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) Further the question on notice 288 of 1996, when was the Bicentennial Tree first officially opened?
- (2) How long has it been closed to the public?
- (3) Why was it closed to the public?
- (4) If the opening on 19 November 1995 was in fact a second official opening, why did this happen?

Mr MINSON replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply:

- (1) The Bicentennial Tree was opened as a fire lookout tree on 2 December 1988 and officially opened as a public recreation site on 19 November 1995.
- (2) It is not closed to the public.
- (3) Not applicable.
- (4) The official opening on 19 November 1995 opened the tree as a recreation site recognising that visitor infrastructure, including toilets, protection platform and rest area around the tree, picnic and barbecue areas, visitor information and interpretation, walktrails, car and bus parking, and public access road had been completed and was available for public use. It also allowed the opportunity to recognise the contribution of the long serving local member who had considerable involvement in planning and developing public facilities by naming it the Dave Evans Bicentennial Tree.

CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT, DEPARTMENT OF - SIMCOA, JARRAH PRODUCTS
SUPPLY

1564. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment:

Further to question on notice 116 of 1996, can the Minister assure the Parliament that -

- (a) only by-products from jarrah sawmilling and thinning operations;
 - (b) no jarrah logs from which sawn timber could be recovered
- are supplied to Simcoa by the Department of Conservation and Land Management?

Mr MINSON replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following answer:

A search of *Hansard* records for 1996 can find no previous question relating to the Members question. Legislative Assembly Question on Notice 116 is not relevant. Can the Member please provide correct information so the appropriate answer can be provided.

CONTAMINATED LAND - REGISTER, LEGISLATION

1572. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) I refer to the coalition's 1993 election promise to establish a register of contaminated land and calls for such a register from developers, lawyers and even the Minister's own department and ask, why, three-and-a-half years after making that promise WA still has no register?
- (2) I also refer to the Department of Environmental Protection's report to Cabinet in December 1994 proposing contaminated sites legislation and ask, why, 18 months later, WA still has no such legislation?
- (3) When will the Government act to honour its election promises and to protect our environment and water resources?

Mr MINSON replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply:

- (1)-(3) Despite knowing of a number of contaminated sites and realising their significance, the former Labor Government took no action for 10 years to address this problem. In fact it actively suppressed action. This left us an awkward legacy to deal with. For this purpose we have proposed contaminated sites legislation. Unfortunately any change in the law will affect the right and responsibilities of current owners of contaminated sites many of whom were not associated with the polluting. Because of this an extensive amount of public consultation has taken place. I know that you have a record for introducing such legislation without a proper public process but we will not do so. I reject any criticism from your side of the House because it is your neglect and willful refusal to recognise the problem that has aggravated the solving of the problem. I suggest your best course would be to apologise to the people of Western Australia for your former Government's atrocious behaviour.

AGRICULTURE WESTERN AUSTRALIA - ANIMAL PROTEIN IN FEED FOR GRAZING ANIMALS
POLICY

1595. Dr CONSTABLE to the Minister for Primary Industry:

- (1) Does Agriculture Western Australia have a policy regarding animal protein in feed produced for grazing animals?
- (2) If yes -
 - (a) what are the essential terms of the policy; and
 - (b) what steps are taken by AWA to ensure that the terms of the policy are implemented?
- (3) Is AWA aware of any person or company that feeds animal protein to grazing animals?
- (4) What processes are in place to detect animal protein feeding?

Mr HOUSE replied:

- (1) Agriculture Western Australia contributed to and supports the resolution of the May 1996 meeting of the Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand regarding this issue.

- (2) (a) That resolution and Agriculture Western Australia policy is that feeding of ruminant material to ruminant animals be prohibited under legislation to support the present voluntary ban on such feeds.
- (b) Agriculture Western Australia is contributing to the development of uniform legislation proposed by the Commonwealth to control the feeding of ruminant protein, via Animal Health Committee. When finalised and approved by ARMCANZ, the legislation will be incorporated into state Statutes.
- (3) Agriculture Western Australia is not aware of any person or company feeding ruminant protein to ruminants. There is presently a voluntary ban in place by stockfeed manufacturers on the use of ruminant material in ruminant feeds and this is to be incorporated into the stockfeed manufacturers code of practice.
- (4) The voluntary ban by stockfeed manufacturers has removed known sources of ruminant protein that may have been fed to ruminants. The legislative basis to enforce the prohibition is still in the process of development.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE - COSTS; BAILIFF'S OFFICE

1619. Mr PENDAL to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

I refer the Minister to question on notice 1370 and ask the following supplementary questions -

- (1) Referring to replies to question on notice 2 (a)-(g), what was the basis upon which the estimates for the operation of the Sheriff's Office with respect to -
 - (a) rent;
 - (b) utilities;
 - (c) operating costs and
 - (d) commissions paid to country bailiffs, but disregarding answers given at (a), (b) and (d) to question on notice 1370?
- (2) What is the apportionment of rent in the Sheriff's Central Law Court Perth Office to civil debt recovery?
- (3) Does the \$210 000 referred to in the answer to question on notice 1370 (4) relate to civil local court bailiffs, inclusive accommodation?
- (4) If the answer to (3) above is yes, can the Minister detail the office rental costs or provision of rental costs for each bailiff's office location by location?

Mr PRINCE replied:

The Attorney General has provided the following reply:

- (1) (a) No estimate, building owned by Government.
- (b) Utility costs are paid for whole of Central Law Courts. No apportionment has been made with respect to the Sheriff's Office.
- (c) Operating costs including salary etc. 1993/94 - \$286,224 and 1994/95 - \$303,272, as per 2., Question on Notice no 1370.
- (d) 1993/4 - \$14,672 1994/95 - \$12,216.
- (2) Unknown, see 1(a).
- (3) Yes
- (4)

Maddington	\$21, 560
Perth	\$54,668
Midland	\$7,104
Fremantle	\$7,283
Rockingham	\$4,149
Northern Suburbs	\$27,245
Kalgoorlie	\$6,358
*Geraldton	\$5,493
*Albany	\$3,158
*Bunbury	\$7,592

*Estimates based on floor space x average commercial rent in location. Obtained from Government Property Office Leasing Section.

STEPHENSON AND WARD INCINERATOR - LICENCE CONDITIONS

1621. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) In relation to the conditions of licence of the Stephenson and Ward incinerator what is the meaning of 'non-standard operations'?
- (2) Do the conditions of licence of the Stephenson and Ward incinerator permit incineration of waste that is not bio-medical waste?
- (3) If yes -
 - (a) what types of waste other than bio-medical waste are permitted to be incinerated at that site; and
 - (b) what types of waste are not permitted to be incinerated at that site?
- (4) Since the current conditions of licence came into force in relation to the Stephenson and Ward incinerator, has the licensee sought permission from the Department of Environmental Protection to incinerate waste other than bio-medical waste?
- (5) If yes -
 - (a) on what dates was such permission sought;
 - (b) what was the nature of these wastes
 - (c) from what sort of establishment did they originate;
 - (d) on what date was each waste consignment incinerated;
 - (e) what permanent records relating to these consignments were kept by the licensee; and
 - (f) has the department rejected any of the licensees' requests for permission to burn waste other than bio-medical waste?
- (6) If yes, what materials has the Department refused to have incinerated at the Stephenson and Ward site?
- (7) Has the Department of Environmental Protection requested the licensee to incinerate materials other than bio-medical waste?
- (8) If yes, what was the nature of these materials and -
 - (a) on what dates was such permission sought;
 - (b) what was the nature of these wastes
 - (c) from what sort of establishments did they originate;
 - (d) on what date was each waste consignment incinerated; and
 - (e) what permanent records relating to these consignments were kept by the licensee?
- (9) In relation to the conditions of the licence relating to storage and acceptance of bio-medical waste by the Stephenson and Ward operation -
 - (a) are there refrigerated storage facilities at the site;
 - (b) are they maintained at a temperature of 5 degrees Celsius or lower;
 - (c) is bio-medical waste stored at the premises pending incineration located within impervious concrete areas;
 - (d) when were refrigerated storage facilities installed at the site; and
 - (e) what is the holding capacity by volume of the storage facilities?
- (10) What are the current requirements applying to the transportation of medical waste?

Mr MINSON replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply:

- (1) I am advised that non-standard operations refers to any significant variance from normal operating procedure which may result in some variation to emissions. It is a general inclusion in the preamble of licences as advice to licensees that the Department of Environmental Protection must be advised of such operations. There have been no notifications of any such operation at the Stephenson and Ward incinerator.
- (2) I am advised that the conditions of licence allow the incineration of waste that is not bio-medical waste.
- (3) (a) Providing discharge from the incinerator meets licence requirements and the waste is not specifically excluded by the licence conditions, other wastes may be incinerated, although the pollution control equipment is designed primarily to control emissions from common biomedical waste, including plastics.

- (b) I am advised that radioactive wastes are not permitted to be incinerated at the site (a protocol is being developed with the Radiological Council for dealing with wastes of very low level radioactivity that are classified as exempt under the Radiation Safety Act).
- (4) Yes.
- (5) (a) Such permission was sought on 17 April 1996.
- (b) The nature of the waste was computer tapes and other similar items.
- (c) The wastes originated from health care organisations and other sources of confidential information which require the waste to be incinerated. Such non - prescribed wastes (e.g. paper, cardboard and computer tapes) could be sourced from anywhere in the State.
- (d) This information is not required to be provided to the Department of Environmental Protection and should be sought from Stephenson and Ward.
- (e) It is not a requirement of the licence for the Stephenson and Ward incinerator that this information be provided to the Department of Environmental Protection. However it is possible that the licensee may retain this data for its own financial and management records.
- (f) No, only one request has so far been made and approved.
- (6) Not applicable, see answer to 5 (f).
- (7)-(8) I am advised that no request has been made by the Department of Environmental Protection to incinerate waste other than biomedical waste at this site since the Department of Environmental Protection was created in 1994. I am further advised that the Department of Environmental Protection has no record of any other requests from the State other than the PCBs incinerated at the site in the early 1980s.
- (9) (a)-(c) Yes.
- (d) The date on which installation of the refrigeration equipment was completed is not recorded but it is known that installation commenced during March 1996, and was completed by early April.
- (e) The cold storage area has the capacity to store two hundred 240 litre mobile garbage bins.
- (10) The current requirements applying to the transportation of medical waste are specified in the "Medical Waste Management Code of Practice for Transporters". Regulations are currently being drafted to provide statutory control over the transportation and disposal of medical wastes.

CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT, DEPARTMENT OF - McCOMB REPORT

1623. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment:

Further to question on notice 879 of 1996 and the tabled report of Professor William McComb "Mapping potential habitat for vertebrates in forests of Western Australia - Final Report". Will the Minister please table -

- (a) pages 76 and 77 (which follow Appendix II, page 75, and precede Appendix IV, page 78);
- (b) pages 1 through 10 (the pages preceding "Contents of the OWLW.ZIP file); and
- (c) page 27 in the section titled "A comparison of jarrah harvest plans on the brush-tailed possum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*) populations in central jarrah forests"?

Mr MINSON replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply:

The pages referred to apparently do not exist as they are not present in the copy in CALM's library. This report is made up of a collection of papers and as it has not been published it has not been paginated properly.

CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT, DEPARTMENT OF - CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT BRANCH, BUDGET

1625. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) What is the total budget of the Catchment Management Branch of the Department of Environmental Protection?

- (2) What was the allocation of Consolidated Revenue to the former Waterways Commission for the office of Catchment Management for the years -
 - (a) 1993-94;
 - (b) 1994-95;
 - (c) 1995-96?
- (3) Does the whole of the above allocation now go to the Catchment Management branch of the DEP?
- (4) Is the DEP the lead agency for ICM or the basis of this allocation of Consolidated Revenue?

Mr MINSON replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply:

- (1) The budget for 1996/97 is \$332,000 consisting of \$120,000 in salaries and operating funds for the Swan Catchment Centre, \$60,000 in grants for catchment groups, and \$152,000 in salaries and operating funds for Catchment Management operations within DEP.
- (2)
 - (a) 1993/94 - \$333,000 expenditure.
 - (b) 1994/95 - \$368,000 expenditure.
 - (c) In 1995/96 the Office of Catchment Management was transferred to the DEP as the Catchment Management Branch. Its Consolidated Revenue allocation was \$392,000.
- (3) No. \$52,000 was reallocated to State of the Environment reporting to help, amongst other things, to identify priority environmental issues on a regional basis.
- (4) No. Integrated catchment management is a process involving all interests in a catchment, not a function of any one agency. Agriculture Western Australia coordinates and supports district and regional catchment management groups in some regions such as the Blackwood River catchment, the Avon River catchment and the South Coast where major regional funding programs are in place. Under the Swan Avon Integrated Catchment Management Program, the Water and Rivers Commission coordinates activities in the Swan catchment. The Catchment Management Branch of the Department of Environmental Protection assists in the setting of environmental objectives in the catchments.

STEPHENSON AND WARD INCINERATOR - CONSULTANTS REPORT, TABLING

1626. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) Further to question on notice 774 of 1996, will the Minister table the consultant's report?
- (2) If not, why not?

Mr MINSON replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply -

- (1)-(2) I am advised that the consultant's report referred to has only recently been completed. I understand that the delay in finishing the document was caused by some inconsistent results being obtained from the onsite drilling at the Welshpool location, which in turn required further drilling and analysis. I understand the completed report is to be presented to the Community Liaison Committee, established by the DEP, on Monday, 26 August 1996, and it will be available to interested persons from that date. I will arrange to provide the member with a copy of the report, and am prepared to offer a briefing on the matter should the member wish one to be provided.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, DEPARTMENT OF - LIQUID WASTE TRANSPORTERS

1627. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) How many liquid waste transporters are registered with the Department of Environmental Protection?
- (2) How many trucks are contained within this total fleet?
- (3) How many of these operators have had their trucks fitted with geographical position devices and level sensing equipment?
- (4) When will the program of fitting this new equipment be completed?

- (5) What is the cost per truck of fitting this new equipment?

Mr MINSON replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply:

- (1) As from 19 July 1996 there were 46 registered transporters.
- (2) At 1 August 1996 there were 101 vehicles in the liquid waste fleet in Perth.
- (3) To date one truck has been fitted with the necessary equipment to monitor the position of the vehicle, and the volume of waste in the tank. This vehicle was effectively the trial vehicle to ensure the system worked effectively. The tender to allow the equipment to be fitted to other trucks is being negotiated with the Department of Contract and Management Services prior to public advertisement, and I understand will be advertised on Saturday 24 August 1996.
- (4) It is hoped that the program will be completed in the 1996-97 financial year, and the Department has developed a plan for this to occur.
- (5) This will not be known until the eventual contract is awarded.

SULPHUR DIOXIDE - KALGOORLIE

1628. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) What levels of sulphur dioxide were detected in the Kalgoorlie area in week 10-17 June 1996?
- (2) How do these levels compare with the environmental protection policy limits for this area?
- (3) What were the causes of the higher levels of sulphur dioxide?

Mr MINSON replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply:

- (1) A monitor in West Kalgoorlie recorded ground level concentrations of sulphur dioxide as follows
-

5 minute average 3971 micrograms per cubic metre;

1 hour average 3661 micrograms per cubic metre; and

3 hour average 1925 micrograms per cubic metre.

These levels were recorded on the 12 June 1996. Normal levels within EPP limits were recorded for the balance of the week.
- (2) They are in excess of the levels set in the policy viz, the Environmental Protection Policy for Kalgoorlie requires that a ground level concentration of 1600 micrograms per cubic metre of sulphur dioxide averaged over one hour be met.
- (3) Western Mining Corporation has admitted that it caused the exceedence. WMC has advised that the exceedence was caused by erratic weather conditions and a horizontal wind shear too high for the air quality control system to detect.

LANE RIVER STATION - PURCHASE, CONTRIBUTIONS BY CALM; AUSTRALIAN NATURE CONSERVATION AGENCY

1634. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment:

What contribution was made by -

- (1) the Department of Conservation and Land Management; and
- (2) the Australian Nature Conservation Agency to the purchase of the Lane River Station?

Mr MINSON replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply:

- (1) \$150 391.41.
- (2) \$150 000.00.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, DEPARTMENT OF - WASTE MANAGEMENT DIVISION

Hazardous Waste, Training

1636. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) What was the extent of the training, provided by the Office of Waste Management, for the landfill site gate attendants responsible for receiving waste during the trial of household hazardous waste collection sites?
- (2) As many of the containers delivered are not labelled or have indecipherable labels which make the products difficult to identify, is there a need for more extensive training for gate attendants or is it to be expected that Department of Environmental Protection personnel will be undertaking a considerable portion of the work in identification and risk assessment?
- (3) What Difficulties currently exist for the safe handling and disposal of organochlorine-chlorine products and potentially dangerous unknown solid and liquid wastes?
- (4) How is it proposed to overcome these difficulties?
- (5) What are the costs associated with identification and disposal of organochlorine-chlorine products?
- (6) What is the expected annual cost to the DEP of involvement in the program to manage household hazardous waste?
- (7) How will the costs of the program to manage household hazardous waste be divided between State Government and local government?
- (8) What is the expected annual cost to the State Government of the program to manage household hazardous waste?
- (9) What is the annual contribution expected from industry to help with identification and disposal of some collected wastes?
- (10) Will the "industry fund" be voluntary?
- (11) Will the State Government provide any incentive for industry to contribute to the "industry fund"?
- (12) If so, what form will the incentive take?
- (13) What problems have been identified in terms of accurate recording of deliveries?
- (14) How is it proposed to overcome these problems?

Mr MINSON replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply:

- (1) To train the site gate attendants of the three existing household hazardous waste collection sites, the Waste Management Division of DEP (formerly Office of Waste Management) provided a comprehensive one day training course (at no direct cost to the Councils). Approximately 10 people were trained.
- (2) To assist with unidentifiable products, the DEP will be undertaking a considerable portion of the work by co-ordinating the identification of unknown products and risk assessment of them (and has employed an additional qualified chemist for this purpose).
- (3) Currently some difficulties exist for potentially dangerous unknown solid and liquid wastes due to a lack of collection facilities and lack of trained personnel. The organochlorine products are currently collected and disposed of by Agriculture Western Australia in close consultation with DEP. The Government, through DEP, has a contract for the disposal of the State's organochlorine waste stockpile with Environmental Solutions International Pty Ltd.
- (4) Difficulties with collections will be largely overcome when the collection facilities for these potentially hazardous wastes are available and personnel are trained by DEP (as part of the program I announced recently). Currently the DEP is working with local authorities to construct the collection facilities as soon as possible. Also the DEP and Agriculture WA are working closely with WorkSafe WA regarding the safe handling of these wastes.
- (5) Costs associated with identification and disposal of organochlorine wastes generally range from \$5 to \$10 per kilogram depending on the analysis required. These costs are borne by Agriculture WA (or DEP through supplementary funding).

- (6) The annual cost to the DEP of involvement in the program to manage household hazardous waste is expected to be quite small, probably in the order of \$20,000. This is expected to come from part of the funds allocated to upgrading and formalising the Industrial Waste Exchange (\$100,000 per annum, rising to \$150,000 per annum in 1997/98) which is closely linked to this project (in addition to this, part of the salary costs of the additional chemist employed by DEP will be devoted to this work - see answer 8 below).
- (7) Local Government authorities are expected to bear the cost of constructing and staffing the collection facilities. They will also be expected to pay for the disposal of collected items which cannot be recycled, reused, returned to the supplier or disposed of by practical means as non-hazardous waste. The State Government will bear the cost of co-ordinating the collection, sorting, recycling, treatment and disposal, and some disposal costs for wastes where no responsible holder can be identified. Also, the Government will assist with helping to design the facilities, training staff and helping with promotional literature, and paying the salary of the chemist required to give professional advice.
- (8) Expected annual cost to the State Government of the program to manage household hazardous wastes is \$45,000 (including direct salary costs).
- (9) The annual contribution expected from industry to help with identification and disposal of some collected wastes is \$20,000 to \$50,000. In addition, industries will be asked to take back some of their wastes for reuse and recycling (as occurs currently in some situations).
- (10) The 'industry fund' is expected to be voluntary.
- (11) The State Government is not expected to provide any direct incentives for industry to contribute to the "industry fund". The industries are expected to be more than compensated for their contribution through the goodwill and publicity generated, and their duty of care obligation.
- (12) Not applicable.
- (13) Problems identified in terms of accurate recording of deliveries at the three sites include the following -
 - (i) unknown and unlabelled containers
 - (ii) reluctance of householders to fill out forms at the site
 - (iii) lack of supervision by site gate attendants on occasions.
- (14) The problems related to accurate recording are being addressed as follows -
 - (i) redesigning the forms to be filled out by householders to make it easier, and simpler to use to ensure accuracy.
 - (ii) householders will be required to answer questions relating to origin of any unknown or unlabelled chemicals to help identification and minimise analysis costs.
 - (iii) continued training of site gate attendants by DEP.
 - (iv) adequate staffing of collection facilities by the local authorities.
 - (v) chemicals will be accepted on the understanding that householders will cooperate in filling out the forms.

WASTE - DEEP WELL INJECTION, GOVERNMENT POLICY

1639. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) What is the Government's policy on deep well injection of wastes?
- (2) What research is being undertaken by the Ministers' Departments on this issue?

Mr MINSON replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply:

- (1) The Government expects that any proposal for the deep well injection of wastes to be the subject of formal environmental impact assessment, including full public review, by the Environmental Protection Authority. The Government will make a decision regarding any such proposal after receiving the Environmental Protection Authority's advice.
- (2) The Department of Environmental Protection on behalf of the Environmental Protection Authority has reviewed practice worldwide. I understand that the Environmental Protection Authority will shortly be releasing a draft position statement on deep and shallow well injection for public review.

SERVICE STATIONS - UNDERGROUND FUEL TANKS, VENTING

1662. Mr RIPPER to the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) When underground fuel tanks at service stations are vented to the atmosphere, what is the range of quantities of fuel lost to the atmosphere by evaporation?
- (2) What proportion of service stations in Western Australia have been required to install back venting systems to prevent this loss of atmosphere?
- (3) Is the Government considering requiring all service stations to install these venting systems?
- (4) If not, why not?

Mr MINSON replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply:

- (1) During the filling of a typical underground storage tank, some 60 litres of fuel (vapour) may be released from vent pipes over a thirty minute period.
- (2) Underground tanks in the metropolitan region are subject to the Environmental Protection (Recovery of Vapours from the Transfer of Organic Liquids) Regulations 1995. These regulations require new sites in the metropolitan region to include vapour collection systems, old sites will need to have the systems installed by 1 July 1999.
- (3) The above regulations apply to the metropolitan region only. The objectives of the regulations are to improve the amenity of residents living near retail outlets; and improve the air quality in the Perth metropolitan region.
- (4) Extension beyond the metropolitan region is not currently considered necessary. Generally, the problems of emission is much reduced with the greater separation distance between service stations and sensitive land uses outside the metropolitan region.

NORTHBRIDGE TUNNEL - IMPACT ON WATERTABLE

1667. Ms WARNOCK to the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) Does the Minister acknowledge that there are many residents within the Northbridge area who are most concerned at possible damage to their gardens and homes from the changes to the watertable in relation to the construction of the Northbridge Tunnel?
- (2) Does the Minister acknowledge that lack of a formal environmental impact assessment process for the Northern City Bypass has significantly contributed to resident apprehension and concern about the likely consequences of changes to the watertable?
- (3) What impartial scientific reports are available to the residents of Northbridge which would allay their fears of extensive property damage and loss of flora from dewatering?

Mr MINSON replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply:

- (1) The residents' concerns are acknowledged. However, the project contractors, Boulderstone-Clough Joint Venture, are bound by contractual obligations to protect vegetation and buildings in the project's dewatering zone.
- (2) As the EPA and DEP have previously advised, environmental concerns raised by the project were managed by making them the subject of the design and construction contract for the project. This meant it was not necessary to use the formal environmental impact assessment process to secure legally-binding conditions to ensure environmental outcomes. This includes the preparation of an environment management plan.
- (3) I am advised that there are no reports covering these specific issues but I understand that the project contractors are keeping residents with concerns informed of progress with the development.

SUBIACO CENTRO DEVELOPMENT - CONTRACTS

1707. Ms WARNOCK to the Minister for Planning:

- (1) Which contracts have already been let in relation to the Subiaco Centro development?
- (2) How is the sinking of the railway critical to the housing development?

- (3) What community benefits will be derived from the sinking of the railway?
- (4) Will these community benefits be in proportion to the cost of sinking the railway?

Mr LEWIS replied:

- (1)
 - (i) Moltoni Corporation at a cost of \$733 000 to clean up the old Humes site. Demolition of State Print building at a cost of \$503 000.
 - (ii) A number of engineering, planning and landscape design and project management consultancies to progress planning and subsequent implementation.
- (2)-(4) Subi Centro is an integrated development of existing industrial and commercial, new commercial, residential and public open space. Sinking the railway will integrate Subi Centro with the existing Subiaco and Wembley communities, provide additional public open space, provide land for redevelopment and sale and improve transport links between the adjoining communities of Wembley and Subiaco. These benefits are viewed as exceeding the cost of sinking the railway.

REAL ESTATE AND BUSINESS AGENTS SUPERVISORY BOARD - ESTIMATED INCOME

1838. Dr CONSTABLE to the Minister for Fair Trading:

- (1) What is the estimated income of the Real Estate and Business Agents Deposits Trust Fund for the current financial year?
- (2) How will that income be applied?
- (3) What was the average annual income, from interest on trust deposits, under the previous system for the last five financial years?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

- (1) The fund has been retitled the Real Estate and Business Agents Supervisory Board Interest Account and the estimated income is \$3 881 000.
- (2) 64 per cent to the Education General Purpose Fund of the Real Estate and Business Agents Supervisory Board; 35 per cent to the Home Buyers Assistance Fund; 1 per cent to the Fidelity Guarantee Fund.
- (3) \$639 904.

SETTLEMENT AGENTS SUPERVISORY BOARD - ESTIMATED INCOME

1844. Dr CONSTABLE to the Minister for Fair Trading:

- (1) What is the estimated income of the Settlement Agents Board interest account for the current financial year?
- (2) How will that income be applied?
- (3) What was the total annual income from interest on trust deposits under the previous system for the last five financial years?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

- (1) \$1 077 500.
- (2) 90 per cent to the Education General Purpose Fund of the Settlement Agents Supervisory Board; 10 per cent to the Fidelity Guarantee Fund.
- (3)

Year	Total Annual Income (\$)
1995/96	341 692
1994/95	279 450
1993/94	137 440
1992/93	137 200
1991/92	199 914

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**POLICE SERVICE - ARGYLE DIAMONDS THEFT INQUIRY***FBIS, AFP Reports***416. Mr McGINTY to the Minister for Police:**

- (1) What does the Minister consider to be his duties in relation to the Argyle reports by Forensic Behavioural Investigative Services and the Australian Federal Police?
- (2) Has he called for all of these reports and read them and, if not, why not?
- (3) Is he intimidated by the Commissioner of Police and is that the reason he has failed to act in the public interest on these matters?

Mr WIESE replied:

The question hardly deserves an answer.

- (1) My belief is that my duties are to ensure that the Police Service is provided with the best possible resources and the best possible support from government in carrying out its role within the community.
- (2) I have not read the AFP report. I do not believe it is appropriate for me to read it until we are close to the time when I will be bringing that report into this Parliament; likewise in relation to the FBIS report.
- (3) I will not dignify the question with an answer.

POLICE SERVICE - ARGYLE DIAMONDS THEFT INQUIRY*FBIS, AFP Reports***417. Mr McGINTY to the Minister for Police:**

On 15 September 1995, Commissioner Falconer told Deputy Commissioner Ayton that three reports had been produced by Forensic Behavioural Investigative Services, one on police incompetence and criminality, one on the Argyle Diamonds fiasco, and one on Mr Ayton's behaviour. Why can two of these reports, on police incompetence and Mr Ayton's behaviour, not be tabled in this House immediately?

Mr WIESE replied:

I understand the report on police incompetence is the Australian Federal Police report that I will be tabling in this House, hopefully next week.

Mr McGinty: That is the FBIS report.

Mr WIESE: I am not aware of the matters the Leader of the Opposition is talking about in relation to the FBIS report. I will table in this Parliament the AFP report on police incompetence.

WATER CORPORATION - SOUTH WEST IRRIGATION SYSTEM, TRANSFER TO SOUTH WEST IRRIGATION COOPERATIVE**418. Mr BRADSHAW to the Minister for Police:**

Has the Government approved the transfer of the south west irrigation system from the Water Corporation to the South West Irrigation Cooperative?

Mr NICHOLLS replied:

I like to think that members of this House are interested in what is taking place. The Government has approved the transfer of 500 kilometres of irrigation system from the Water Corporation to the South West Irrigation Cooperative. The heads of agreement contract is to be signed tomorrow by the Chairman of the Water Corporation and the chairman of the cooperative. The change is a departure from ownership and management arrangements that have been in place for the last 80 years and recognises a change in the nature of agriculture and the participation of growers. The changes that are taking place in the south west irrigation area are similar to the changes that I and the Government would like to see in other irrigation districts such as the Ord, the Gascoyne and the Preston area. The change will allow the irrigation farmers to have a direct say on not only the management of the assets, but also the irrigation of the area. The farmers' cooperative will be restructured into an irrigation business, and we expect it to operate on a commercially sustainable basis within five years. There will be provision to assist with its establishment. For the information of members, the irrigation system began in 1916 with water being used from the then new Harvey Dam to irrigate 1 200 hectares of citrus growing land. Today the scheme irrigates 1 668 properties covering more than 22 000 hectares through 500 km of drainage channels.

Several members interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS: Members opposite may not care too much about this; however, the people of Western Australia and the member for Wellington are interested in this issue. This is a major step forward for the Government and the growers in that area. It is a direction that we should be applauding.

NORTHBRIDGE TUNNEL - WESTERN END PLANS

419. Ms WARNOCK to the Minister representing the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Have plans been drawn up to reduce the length of the Northbridge tunnel at its western end? In addition, do these plans incorporate reducing the covered area west of the tunnel from 24 metres west of Fitzgerald Street to about 3 m?
- (2) What effect will this have on the undertakings which the Government gave to St Brigid's Church?
- (3) Will the Minister table current plans for the western end of the tunnel and, if not, why not?
- (4) Will the Minister give an unequivocal guarantee to the lease and property owners affected by the tunnel that all the Government's undertakings to them will be honoured?

Mr LEWIS replied:

I thank the member for the question. The member has been here long enough to know that she should not expect me to answer a question like that off the top of my head in this House. I suggest she consider the conventions of this place and place the question on notice.

EXPORTS - FIGURES

420. Mr TRENORDEN to the Premier:

Will the Premier inform the House of Western Australia's latest export performance, and how these figures compare with previous years?

Mr COURT replied:

I do not know whether members opposite want to hear some positive news; however, I will put it on the record anyway. Treasury has provided me with the latest figures. The comparison between 1994-95 and 1995-96 shows that Western Australia's exports have grown from \$16.4b to \$18.9b. In nominal terms that is growth of nearly 16 per cent in the past year.

Mr Ripper: Is that corrected for farm production differences?

Mr COURT: I will give the member for Belmont the breakup. Western Australia's share of national exports has risen from 25.8 per cent to 26.2 per cent. The rise was underpinned by a 63 per cent, or \$704m, increase in wheat exports with good prices and the reasonable harvest; an 11 per cent, or \$339m, rise in gold exports; a 60 per cent increase in nickel exports; and a growth of 14 per cent in LNG exports. The exports of the high value added or the elaborately transformed manufacturers rose to \$1b in 1995-96 to account for nearly 6 per cent of total exports. The major contributions to this growth were transport equipment, \$172m - that is including the high speed ferries; inorganic chemicals, \$139m; general industrial machinery, \$94m; pharmaceutical exports, \$28m; and telecommunications exports, \$40m. All in all it has been a very good year for export growth. The encouraging factor is the growth in value added products.

JUSTICE, MINISTRY OF - CAMP KURLI MURRI

421. Ms ANWYL to the Minister assisting the Minister for Justice:

Given that the Government has wasted \$2.8m of taxpayers' money on the failed white elephant in the desert - juvenile Camp Kurli Murri - will the Minister -

- (1) table the Newman report today;
- (2) confirm that the camp is to close straight away;
- (3) admit the Government must go back to the drawing board to find solutions to juvenile crime now that its centrepiece has collapsed; and
- (4) apologise to the Western Australian public for his Government's costly attempt to score points in the Glendalough by-election?

Mr MINSON replied:

- (1)-(4) The expression that the money has been wasted is the member for Kalgoorlie's and not mine. I will not table the new report today. I will table the report only when I am satisfied with the Ministry of Justice's response to the many points raised in Kingsley Newman's review. It is not possible for anybody who has not read the report or followed the progress of those who have been sent to Camp Kurli Murri to be fully aware of the situation. I refer members to "The 7.30 Report" television program on Monday night which dealt with the successes and failures of the camp. I understand why members opposite are silent about some of the stories told in that program. I will announce a comprehensive response to the suggestions of Judge Newman.

The member suggested that I should apologise on behalf of the Government to the people of Western Australia. However, Judge Newman will have some good things to say about Camp Kurli Murri. All pilot programs must be reviewed and, in the light of that review, must be responded to and changed. The Government will announce in the fullness of time whether the camp will be changed or needs to be changed, and the quantum and direction of any change. That will be done when I am satisfied that the department has fully responded to the many points Judge Newman has raised in the area of juvenile justice, and not before.

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH WEEK - SIGNIFICANCE

422. Mr BOARD to the Minister for Labour Relations:

Will the Minister inform the House of the significance of Occupational Safety and Health Week, and the importance of continuing to focus on workplace safety?

Dr Watson: He spoke about that yesterday.

Mr KIERATH replied:

The member for Kenwick is right in saying that I commented on this matter yesterday, but I shall do so again because today is spot the hazard day as part of Occupational Safety and Health Week.

Several members interjected.

Mr KIERATH: Members opposite must control themselves for a moment. Members will be aware that we set ourselves a target of 10 per cent reduction in lost time injuries over the first four years and we have achieved 7 per cent of that in the first year.

Dr Watson interjected.

Mr KIERATH: I am reminding members opposite. I hope they will encourage and congratulate us on that achievement. Members opposite have been silent in their congratulations; we do not hear them. We are doing better than members opposite ever did in government. We are so confident after that reduction that we have set perhaps one of the boldest visions for occupational safety and health; that is, to halve LTIs and deaths by the year 2000. It is a big ask and we will require the support of the Opposition to achieve that. Part of the ThinkSafe, WorkSafe campaign is ThinkSafe SAM. The S is for spot the hazard, the A for assess the risk and the M for make the change. I could not help but notice that recently the member for Ashburton was bitten by a dog while doorknocking. I want to bring home to the member the issues surrounding SAM. First - spot the hazard - he should have spotted the dog; secondly - assess the risk - losing a leg is not worth two votes; thirdly - make the change - he should have put a card in the letterbox instead!

AIR POLLUTION - NORTHBRIDGE TUNNEL STUDIES; CAT BUSES

423. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister representing the Minister for Transport

I refer to the alarming statistic that air pollution is killing 75 people a year in Perth.

- (1) What studies in air pollution were commissioned as part of the planning for the city northern bypass and Northbridge tunnel.
- (2) Why did the Government not specify catalytic converters for the new hi-tech CAT buses to dramatically reduce exhaust emissions and so help make our air clean?

Mr LEWIS replied:

I think I was advised of this question at 12.44 pm today.

Dr Edwards: We sent it a long time before then.

Mr LEWIS: The Minister for Transport has not been able to give me any advice. I hope that the member for Maylands will take it on notice. As I understand it - this should be confirmed in the answer that will come from the Minister for Transport - the engines in the CAT buses are to the specification of what is known as Euro 2002.

Dr Edwards: With those engines a special fuel must be used, which we are not using.

Mr LEWIS: It is a very high standard of motor developed particularly for the reduction of emissions.

Dr Edwards: It works only when it uses that special type of diesel fuel.

Mr LEWIS: Who is answering the question?

Mrs Hallahan: Answer her interjection.

The SPEAKER: The member for Armadale, order!

Mr LEWIS: To provide a more specific reply it is obviously appropriate that I seek further advice from the Minister for Transport.

WESTERN POWER - TIME-OF-USE TARIFF FOR RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMERS

424. Dr HAMES to the Minister for Energy

I understand that the Minister launched the time-of-use electricity tariff for residential customers today. While this tariff will initially target the new home buyer market, how will constituents in my electorate of Dianella, who reside in established suburbs such as Yokine and Dianella, be able to take advantage of this tariff?

Mr C.J. BARNETT replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

I was pleased this morning to be able to announce on behalf of Western Power a time-of-use tariff for residential customers. It is an important step in the delivery of energy both in price and service in this State. The price will be applied initially to new home owners but will be available to all home owners. It will amount to having an electricity price that reflects the cost of electricity generation. Although the price will rise in peak periods it will fall substantially in off-peak periods. Overall it is estimated that household electricity consumers should be able to save up to 30 per cent on electricity bills. They should save at least \$45 a year. Depending on the type of appliance and their ability to change their behaviour, they could save substantially more. On weekends and off-peak periods the standard price of electricity to householders is \$12.29 a unit.

Householders will now be able to use the new Smartpower system to buy electricity at weekends at either 6¢ or 9¢ a unit, which will be a substantial saving. The question was about new homes as distinct from existing homes. The initial promotion will be in the new home market. I expect that the new Smartpower meters, which are sophisticated metering technology - the most advanced in Australia - will become part of the standard package for new home buyers. The cost of the meter for new homes will be \$199. The cost for existing homes will be around \$329 because they will require not only the meter but also a significant amount of rewiring. However, despite the fact that it will be more expensive, I believe a large number of people in existing homes will opt for this meter because they will save on energy over the long term; they will have choice in the way in which they consume energy; and if they care about energy efficiency, conservation and the environment, they will have a very real and practical way of applying that for their homes and families.

FAMILY COURT - VOLUNTARY MARRIAGE COUNSELLING, \$40 FEE

425. Mrs HENDERSON to the Premier:

- (1) Has the Premier received advice about the Federal Government's plan to introduce a fee of \$40 an hour for voluntary marriage counselling provided by the Western Australian Family Court?
- (2) Does the Premier support such a fee?
- (3) Given that the Western Australian Family Court is the only family court in Australia set up by a State Government, will the State Government now provide funds to enable couples whose marriage is in difficulty to receive free counselling, as they have done in the past, to enable them to settle matters such as the care and custody of, and access to, their children by agreement rather than by fighting it out in the court?

Mr COURT replied:

Before I answer this question, I table some papers with regard to the previous question.

[See paper No 453.]

(1)-(3) I thank the member for the question. I am not aware of a request with regard to a charge of \$40 an hour, but -

Mrs Henderson: Daryl Williams announced it in the Budget.

Mr COURT: I am not aware of it, but I will make some inquiries to see whether it has come to my office or to someone else's office in government. I cannot comment on the matter because, as I said, I am not aware of the change, but now that the member has asked the question, I will make those inquiries and provide her with an answer.

POLITICAL DONATIONS - INITIATIVES BY MINISTER FOR LABOUR RELATIONS

426. Mr MARSHALL to the Minister for Labour Relations:

Today on radio, the member for Belmont raised the issue of political donations and linked them to government contracts. Has the Minister for Labour Relations made any initiatives in the area of political donations?

Mr KIERATH replied:

I thank the member for the question. I could not believe that the member for Belmont went on the airwaves this morning to raise the issue of political donations to the Labor Party, because I think -

Mr Blaikie interjected.

Mr KIERATH: That is right. They have been judging people by their own abysmal standards. Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! A member who interjected asked in what way the question related to the Minister's portfolio. At the moment it seems to me that the question does not relate to the Minister's responsibilities, and unless he can indicate quickly how it does relate, he will have to discontinue his answer.

Mr KIERATH: Certainly, Mr Speaker. It relates to trade union donations to political parties and to legislation that is still in the other House about political donations from trade unions, which have a very privileged position in law. The Opposition has double standards. When members opposite were in government, they had secret meetings; they did deals by going nudge nudge, wink wink; they had the Curtin Foundation; they had brown paper bags; and they had a leader's fund. Does WA Inc ever ring a bell for members opposite? I accept that the public has had an opportunity of judging the Opposition on that matter -

Point of Order

Mr RIPPER: Mr Speaker, the Minister is clearly going right outside his portfolio. He has no responsibility for electoral legislation and the disclosure rules for political donations. He is the Minister for Labour Relations. It does not seem that he is dealing with anything related to his portfolio.

The SPEAKER: I agree. I ask the Minister to discontinue his answer.

Questions without Notice Resumed

HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE PROGRAM - BUDGET CHANGES

427. Dr WATSON to the Minister for Health:

Yesterday the Minister told the House that he did not have information or detail about budget changes to the home and community care program and other aged care services. Today the federal Liberal Minister for Aged Care said -

I rang Kevin Prince just the night before the Budget was brought down and we followed that up with a package of material . . . I'm saying Kevin was delivered information on budget night.

Has the Minister developed post-Budget amnesia because he wants to hide from the aged and disadvantaged cost increases that are on the way?

Mr PRINCE replied:

I do not have post-Budget amnesia. I am aware of what Minister Moylan said on radio today. I now table the papers she sent to me, which include a booklet headed "Strength In Our Families" and a series of facts sheets - all of which is publicly available. She rang the night before the Budget to explain in general terms the thrust of the Budget and the directions it would take.

Regarding the home and community care program - about which a question was asked yesterday - she was specific. The budget announcements indicate a 6 per cent increase in HACC funding as claimed. There is a 12 per cent increase in current purpose funding between 1995-96 and 1996-97, but there seems to be an offset in the capital

purposes budget which reduces it to 6 per cent. I say "seems to be" because it is a conclusion we have come to by looking at papers, and from discussions now between state and commonwealth officials.

The papers, which are part of the budget papers, are general statements, in some respects, with some specifics but the detail is in the process of being worked out. That is what the federal Minister said on radio this morning: It is the subject of debate and discussion and is being worked out as we speak.

[See papers Nos 454 and 455.]

AGED CARE - ENTRY FEE, INCREASED SERVICE CHARGES

428. Dr WATSON to the Minister for Health:

- (1) In relation to aged care policy, does the Minister support the entry fee of \$26 000-\$88 000 and increased service charges being imposed on aged nursing home patients?
- (2) Can the Minister guarantee that young people with acquired disabilities who need nursing home care will not have to pay these upfront charges? This is a matter that affects the Minister for Disability Services too!

Mr PRINCE replied:

- (1)-(2) In the radio interview this morning federal Minister Judi Moylan said -

Well first of all the Government will not be charging an entry fee contribution of \$26,000 that's one of the misunderstandings that has been put about . . .

Put about by the Leader of the Opposition! She also said -

. . . what we said we would do is unify the nursing home and the hostel situation . . .

That has been announced. The supplementary question is incorrect. It says something that is totally wrong.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT - SCHOOL ENTRY AGE

429. Mrs van de KLASHORST to the Minister for Education:

I refer to an advertisement in the *Comment News* on Tuesday, 6 August 1996 by Hon Alannah MacTiernan, member for East Metropolitan Region, in which she refers to proposed changes to the school starting age. Is it correct, as asserted by Hon Alannah MacTiernan in the advertisement, that -

- (1) Under the Government's plan, children with birthdays between July to December cannot start school until they are seven;
- (2) the Minister has misrepresented the starting age in other States; what is called grade 1 in New South Wales and Victoria is in fact the second year of compulsory schooling?

This type of advertisement, if not true, serves only to frighten parents and is totally irresponsible.

The SPEAKER: Order! Like many questions that have been asked lately, the latter part of the member's question should not be included.

Mr C.J. BARNETT replied:

I thank the member for the question. It drew my attention to the advertisement that I now have in front of me. Under the name of Hon Alannah MacTiernan the advertisement states -

Under the Court Government plan, children with birthdays from July to September cannot start school until they are seven. It is claimed this will bring WA in line with other states.

The Government has not made a decision on that. If the Government changed the starting date to 30 June, it would mean that children would either be six or would turn six during the first half of year 1. The oldest children could be when they started year 1 would be six and a half. This advertisement says that they cannot start school until they are seven. That is totally wrong. Members opposite cannot count.

With respect to the second part of the question the situation is complicated because of the different terminology between States. In all States and Territories the compulsory age at which children must attend school or an approved alternative is six. In New South Wales children reach the age of compulsory education during their kindergarten year and in Victoria it is during their preparatory year. In Western Australia children currently reach the age of compulsory education during year 1. If the Government were to change the entry cut off date to 30 June, some children would reach the age of compulsory education during preprimary. The age of Western Australia's children when they were in preprimary programs and in year 1 would then be more in line with other States. The

implementation of the full time five-year-old program brings Western Australia more in line with other States and Territories in the provision of early childhood education by offering 13 years of full time education.

I realise that the terminology differs from State to State; however, it is totally fallacious to suggest that children must be seven before they start school. It is complicated; different systems apply in different States. However, before members opposite put out totally incorrect, disturbing advertisements, they should check their facts.
