

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 6 May 1982

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

ACTS AMENDMENT (MOTOR VEHICLE FEES) BILL

Second Reading

MR RUSHTON (Dale—Minister for Transport) [10.46 a.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this Bill is to amend the Main Roads Act 1930-1981, the Road Traffic Act 1974-1981, and the Transport Act 1966-1981.

The Bill seeks to achieve two principal objectives. Firstly it seeks to simplify existing accounting procedures as they relate to the administration of the Main Roads Department in its relationship with the treasury. It is intended that the Main Roads Department should have one fund at the Treasury. This will be known as the Main Roads trust fund, with all revenue and expenditure of the Main Roads Department going through this fund. It will, of course, be necessary to establish separate detailed accounts within the Main Roads Department's accounting structure to meet the various requirements of the department and in accordance with prudent accounting practices.

The overall thrust is to improve accounting efficiency in the Main Roads Department; and no changes of principle are involved. There will, however, be some change in the names of the various funds and accounts as follows—

Old name	New name
Main Roads trust account	Main Roads trust fund
Railway crossing protection fund	Railway crossing protection account
Inner metropolitan councils' urban road fund	Inner metropolitan councils' urban road account
Outer metropolitan councils' urban road fund	Outer metropolitan councils' urban road account

The second objective of the Bill is to reallocate the revenue received for the transfer of motor vehicles under the Road Traffic Act, from the Main Roads Department to the Consolidated Revenue Fund. The reduction in funds to the Main Roads Department as a result of this change will be taken into account in determining the adjustments that will be necessary to road user charges from other sources.

The collection of transfer fees is an offset against the administrative costs associated with transferring the ownership of a motor vehicle from one party to another, and consequently it is wholly an administrative task performed by the

Police Department and, in certain cases, by local authorities on behalf of the Police Department. The expenditure associated with performing this service is met wholly by the Police Department from Consolidated Revenue. Thus it is considered that the revenue resulting from the cause of this expenditure should be credited to Consolidated Revenue. This again is a simple accounting change. Nevertheless, one consequential effect of this redirection of revenue needs to be clearly explained. Under the provisions of section 32 (1) (c) of the Main Roads Act a formula is set forth which ensures that a certain minimum amount of moneys is allocated to an account responsible for financing the solution to problems associated with the conflict between road and rail traffic at railway crossings. The current formula in the Act provides that a fixed ratio of the total amount of transfer fees received by the Police Department should be set aside for works associated with improving railway crossing protection. In fact an interdepartmental committee works actively in this area; and considerable good work and improvements to railway crossings have been achieved.

It is the Government's intention that this work should continue without any reduction in effort. To ensure that this is clearly understood, it is proposed to stipulate in this amendment to the Main Roads Act that there be an allocation for railway crossing protection for the year ended 30 June 1983, amounting to \$650 000. This figure is in keeping with the amount that would be expected normally to accrue in 1982-83 to railway crossing protection, had these changes not been made. In fact, it can be shown from figures the commissioner of Main Roads has made available that expenditure on the average over the last five years has been higher than the minimum required under the Act. There is no intention to depart from this level of expenditure which is based on safety and protection needs at this time. The amendment also will allow the Minister, on the recommendation of the Commissioner of Main Roads, to set the amount to be allocated to the account in future years.

I reiterate that it is not the Government's intention to depart adversely from the general level of expenditure on railway crossing improvements in recent years.

Additional changes are associated with tidying up the Main Roads Act as well as minor name changes to accounts under the Road Traffic Act and the Transport Act which are relevant to the purpose of this Bill, and which can be dealt with in detail in the Committee stage.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Tonkin.

MOTOR VEHICLE DRIVERS INSTRUCTORS AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

MR RUSHTON (Dale—Minister for Transport) [10.53 a.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

The Motor Vehicle Drivers Instructors Act came into operation on 28 February 1964. That Act provides for the licensing of instructors engaged for reward in the teaching of persons to drive motor vehicles, and for incidental and other purposes.

Section 7 of that Act provides for a fee not exceeding \$10 to be prescribed for an application for a licence, or a renewal thereof. This licence authorises the holder to Act as a driving instructor. The prescribed fee was amended in February 1979 to an amount of \$10, and that, in effect, is the maximum presently allowed.

In August 1981 the Government approved an increase in the fee to an amount of \$15 and gave notice of such in the budgetary provisions. As it has been found that the prescribed fee cannot go beyond \$10, this Bill is to provide for the limit of fees to be removed from the provisions of the Act, and to have such contained within the regulations.

With inflationary and other monetary trends, it is Treasury policy to provide for monetary amounts levied to be within the framework of regulations which appertain to the particular collection. It is proposed that, following the passage of this Bill, the fee of \$15, as previously approved, will be levied for driving instructors' licences and renewals.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr McIver.

SKELETON WEED AND RESISTANT GRAIN INSECTS (ERADICATION FUNDS) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

MR OLD (Katanning—Minister for Agriculture) [10.55 a.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Legislation was first enacted in 1974 for a levy on grain and seed producers to fund the eradication of skeleton weed in Western Australia, and to enable payment of compensation to growers required to destroy grain crop or seeds.

The original Act, the Skeleton Weed (Eradication Fund) Act, covered three crop years and has since been extended, in both 1976 and 1979, for further three-year terms.

Additionally, in November 1980, the Skeleton Weed (Eradication Fund) Act was amended to allow for the establishment of a resistant grain insects eradication fund. This amendment allowed for the transfer of up to a maximum of \$20 000 annually from the levy proceeds to establish a fund, which cannot exceed this amount, and which is to be used to combat outbreaks of grain insect resistant to insecticides in common use.

The present Act is due to expire and the Bill now before the House is to extend the legislation for a further three years covering the 1982-83, 1983-84, and 1984-85 crop years. The levy will remain unaltered at the original level of \$30 for each producer delivering 30 tonnes or more of grain, seed, or grain and seed in aggregate.

The extension of the Act for a further three-year term has the support of both the Primary Industry Association of WA (Inc.) and The Pastoralists and Graziers Association of WA (Inc.). It is important that the skeleton weed eradication campaign be continued.

Since skeleton weed was first identified in Western Australia in 1963, 95 farm outbreaks have been discovered, 23 of them in the 1981-82 season. Approximately one-third of these outbreaks have been eradicated. The others have all been treated, but eradication cannot be claimed until inspections over three consecutive cropping years show that no further plants emerge.

All infestations cover relatively small areas and only 20 hectares in total needed treatment in the season just finished.

The campaign against skeleton weed has gained wide support in the rural community and many of the discoveries have been reported by farmers. The fact that farmers are reporting skeleton weed, and infestations are being found while small, makes full control of this weed a practical proposition.

The development of resistance by grain insects to insecticides commonly used for grain treatment, especially the organo phosphate group, would be very detrimental to the Western Australian grain growing industry. A nil tolerance exists for insect contamination of export grain and rejection of shipments, because the presence of grain insects could prove very costly to the industry.

By introducing an on-farm inspection service and encouraging farm hygiene, it has been

possible to greatly improve the level of control of grain insects on farms.

If a case of resistant grain insects was discovered, treatment would be necessary on the farm to prevent the insects reaching the grain handling system. The cost of treatment of a farm outbreak, using fumigation techniques, could be as high as \$5 000. Because of this large expense, the resistant grain insect fund was established to enable authorities to take prompt action and meet treatment costs from the fund.

A serious outbreak of grain insects was found on a property at Northam in 1978, but further cases have not been discovered and hopefully the problem will not develop.

However, the contingency fund should be maintained to allow for prompt eradication measures to be taken if infestations of resistant insects are found.

Additional to extension of the period of the Skeleton Weed and Resistant Grain Insects (Eradication Funds) Act, the Bill deletes references to the repealed Vermin and Noxious Weeds Acts and refers in their place to the Agriculture and Related Resources Protection Act.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Evans.

RESERVES AND LAND REVESTMENT BILL

Second Reading

MR LAURANCE (Gascoyne—Minister for Lands) [11.00 a.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

The Bill incorporates seven separate actions affecting Class "A" reserves together with a proposal to cancel the trust on land held as a Class "C" reserve, and a further requirement for the vesting of land for the purpose of a pedestrian access way.

In accordance with practice over many years, this Bill is presented to Parliament late in the sitting so as to include as many amendments as possible prior to Parliament's going into recess.

By way of explanation and with regard to the proposed amendment concerning the removal of the trust on land set apart for an ambulance depot at Narrogin, in cases where a body holding land which is subject to a trust desires to sell such land, it is necessary, providing the proposal has merit, to have some authority under which approval can be given.

Certain bodies holding such lands are governed by their own legislation which provides for sale with the consent of the Governor and typical examples of the bodies to which I refer are the various church organisations having their own church property Acts.

In the case of the St. John Ambulance Association, there is no special legislation under which sale can be approved. The Land Act does not provide the necessary authority and in keeping with legal opinion given by the conveyancer in 1970, the proper and correct way to deal with the matter is to seek the introduction of a Bill in the Parliament which would empower the association to sell and transfer the said land freed and discharged from any trust.

Again, in respect of the amendment proposing vesting of land for the Westgate Mall at Fremantle, in normal circumstances and where land is registered in certificate of title in the name of the Crown and it is desired to revest the land in Her Majesty as of her former estate and remove it from the operation of the Transfer of Land Act, the revestment could be accomplished by proclamation by the Governor under the provisions of section 243 of the Transfer of Land Act.

In the case of Westgate Mall, however, and as the land is in fact a pedestrian access way, there are certain implied rights not only in favour of the registered proprietors of the adjoining lots, but also in favour of the public generally.

Because of these implied rights it has been ruled previously by a former Commissioner of Titles that the land should not be revested under the Transfer of Land Act and hence the need for approval from a higher authority—in this case, Parliament.

I will now deal with each separate action in the order of the Bill.

Class "A" Reserve No. 8550 is set apart for the purpose of "stopping place" and is not vested. Class "C" Reserve No. 26150 is set apart for the purpose of "conservation of flora" and also, is not vested. Both reserves are located eight kilometres west of Pingelly.

Because of the biological importance of the two reserves, Mr B. G. Muir in his report, "Some Nature Reserves of the Western Australian Wheatbelt—Part 25: Pingelly Shire" recommended that Reserve No. 26150 be retained in its present form, combined with Reserve No. 8550 and vested in the Western Australian Wildlife Authority. The Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, after consultation with the Shire of Pingelly, has requested that Mr Muir's

recommendations be implemented and the purpose of the reserve to be changed to "conservation of flora and fauna". The Shire of Pingelly has agreed to the proposal.

In order to accomplish this, it is proposed to cancel Reserve No. 8550, include the subject area in Reserve No. 26150, vest the reserve in the Western Australian Wildlife Authority, and change its purpose to "conservation of flora and fauna". Parliamentary approval is sought to cancel Class "A" Reserve No. 8550.

Class "A" Reserve No. 20952, containing 1 523 square metres, is vested in the Shire of Bayswater for the purpose of "recreation". The land contained in the reserve was held originally in freehold by the then Bayswater Road Board which in 1931 resolved to transfer the land to the Crown with the intention that it be revested, reserved for the purpose of "recreation", classified as of Class "A", and vested in the board. This action was completed in 1932.

In 1981 the shire advised that the reserve was no longer used for recreation as it was too small and surrounded by industry. An onsite inspection revealed that the area is now used mainly for vehicular access to adjoining sites and as a dumping ground.

The shire now wishes to change the purpose of the reserve from "recreation" to "parking and access" with the vesting remaining with the shire.

In order to effect this change the classification must be amended from Class "A" to Class "C" which will necessitate parliamentary approval.

Class "A" Reserve No. 6638 contains an area of 77.8514 hectares and is set apart for "recreation" and vested in the City of Fremantle with power to lease. Portion of this reserve is leased to the Royal Fremantle Golf Club and the majority of the balance is operated as a public golf course by the city council.

Council has requested an area be excised from Class "A" Reserve No. 6638 for separate reservation for "municipal nursery". An area containing 1.0980 hectares has been surveyed to the city's requirement in a position so as not to interfere with current or future golf course use and is now identified as Fremantle Lot No. 1995.

Council is currently operating its plant nursery on 8 196 square metres of nearby land which it owns in freehold. As part of its examination and rationalisation of surplus resources, council has determined that much of this site is not now required. However, because the site is surrounded on three sides by residential development and has only a limited road frontage, excision of the unwanted portion is difficult. Council has

concluded therefore that disposal of the whole site is the only option available.

Of the proposed new site to be excised from Class "A" Reserve No. 6638, approximately half will be devoted to nursery activities directly associated with the maintenance of the public golf course. The balance will be used to accommodate the council's municipal nursery activities as are currently located on the existing site.

Exclusion of the area from this Class "A" Reserve No. 6638 requires parliamentary approval and authority is sought accordingly.

Class "A" Reserve No. 11533 containing 6.2575 hectares is set apart for the purpose of "parklands and recreation" and is vested in the Shire of Augusta-Margaret River.

At the request of the shire, a centreline survey was undertaken to redefine Albany Terrace in the townsite of Augusta. It was discovered that in fact the road had been constructed through Reserve No. 11533.

In order to rationalise the situation, it is now proposed to excise that portion of Albany Terrace which extends through Reserve No. 11533; however, because the area of the road exceeds 1/20th of the total area of reserve, parliamentary approval is required to bring about the change.

The shire has requested in addition the excision from Reserve No. 11533, an area of 9 513 square metres surveyed as Augusta Lot No. 828 for use as a "parking and public facilities" reserve. This action will provide car and trailer parking for a nearby public boat launching ramp. Parliament's approval is therefore sought to—

- (a) excise and dedicate that portion of Albany Terrace which extends through Class "A" Reserve No. 11533; and
- (b) excise and set apart that portion of Class "A" Reserve No. 11533 surveyed as Augusta Lot No. 828.

The Tammin Shire Council has requested the Lands Department to survey and acquire land required for a deviation of Gardner Reserve Road, located some 16 kilometres south of Tammin, to improve road safety.

The affected land forms part of freehold Avon Location 26778 and portion of Class "A" "protection of indigenous flora" Reserve No. 20041. This reserve contains an area of 583.1520 hectares and was placed under the control of the National Parks Authority in accordance with the provisions of the Parks and Reserves Act. Reserve No. 20041 contains at least five endemic plant species and was named the "Charles Gardner

Reserve" to commemorate the name of the late Government botanist.

Advice has been received that the National Parks Authority is agreeable to this proposal to excise some 5730 m² from Class "A" Reserve No. 20041, being the new road alignment and portion of reserve made redundant by the deviation. The proposal calls also for the inclusion in Class "A" Reserve No. 20041 of some 8130 m², being portion of closed road and portion of freehold location 26778 made redundant also by the new road.

In return for the freehold land, the excised portion of Reserve No. 20041 and portion of closed road containing a total area of 8085 m², will be transferred to the owner of location 26778, who has also agreed to this proposal.

This clause seeks Parliament's approval to excise an area of 5730 m² and include an area of 8130 m² in Class "A" Reserve No. 20041.

Class "C" Reserve No. 19801 containing about 20.2343 hectares is set apart for the purpose of "rubbish depot" and is not vested. The reserve which is situated near the Townsite of Shackleton is unsuitable for refuse disposal due to winter flooding.

An unauthorised rubbish dump has been established on portion of Class "A" Reserve No. 24505 which is set apart for "conservation of flora" and is not vested. As no other site is available for rubbish disposal it is now proposed to cancel Reserve No. 19801, include the subject area in Reserve No. 24505, and in exchange excise an area of 8.2445 hectares from Reserve No. 24505—now identified as Kwolyin A.A. lot No. 424—for use as the authorised disposal site. Both the Bruce Rock Shire Council and the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife have agreed to this proposal. The Department of Fisheries and Wildlife also has requested the purpose of Reserve No. 24505 be amended to "conservation of flora and fauna" with vesting in the Western Australian Wildlife Authority.

Parliamentary approval is sought to effect the proposed changes to Class "A" Reserve No. 24505.

Class "C" Reserve No. 29632 containing 1 416 m² is vested in the Minister for Works for the purpose of "pump site (PWD)". The reserve, which is situated on the banks of the Gascoyne River, Carnarvon, no longer is required by the Public Works Department as the pumping station was closed and removed some time ago.

At Public Works Department's suggestion and with the approval on the Shire of Carnarvon, it is proposed to cancel Reserve No. 29632 and

include the subject area in the surrounding Class "A" Reserve No. 19145 "National Park—vested in the Shire of Carnarvon".

Parliamentary approval is sought to amend the boundaries of this Class "A" Reserve.

Class "C" Reserve No. 24745 containing 675 m² and comprising Narrogin Lots Nos. 1129 and 1282, is set apart for "ambulance depot" and is held in trust for that purpose by the St. John Ambulance Association in Western Australia incorporated under Crown grant volume 1208 folio 326. The land, which is used by the Narrogin subcentre of the association, contains a hall, garage, and toilet block.

Due to expansion, the present land and buildings are inadequate for the association's future needs. As it is not possible to acquire additional land adjoining the reserve, a new site is being sought in the grounds of the Narrogin Hospital. In order to finance the cost of construction of the new centre, the association has sought approval to acquire its present site and have the trust removed so that the land can be sold.

Parliamentary approval is required to cancel the trust so that the land can be transferred in fee simple, free of encumbrance.

Westgate Mall is a public access way situated in a shopping complex bounded by Cantonment Street, Point Street, and Adelaide Street in the City of Fremantle. The land the subject of the mall comprising Fremantle Town Lots Nos. 219, 220, 221, and 336, is vested in the Crown for the purpose of "pedestrian access way" pursuant to section 20A of the Town Planning and Development Act and cannot be used for any other purpose.

The City of Fremantle, on behalf of the shopkeepers, wishes to close the mall at night to prevent vandalism, but is prevented from doing so at the present time because of the status of the land.

To achieve the desired result it is now proposed to vest the subject land in trust in the City of Fremantle thereby bringing the mall under its control and management.

However, before this can be done, the land which is currently contained in Certificate of Title volume 1288 folio 663 will be required to be revested in Her Majesty as to her former estate and removed from the operation of the Transfer of Land Act. The land can then be reserved under section 29 of the Land Act and vested in the City of Fremantle in trust for the purpose of "pedestrian access way".

Parliamentary approval is sought to effect this change.

I commend the Bill to the House, and table copies of the maps relating to the various proposals contained therein.

The maps were tabled (see paper No. 196).

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Evans.

BILLS (2): MESSAGES

Appropriations

Messages from the Deputy Governor received and read recommending appropriations for the purposes of the following Bills—

1. Skeleton Weed and Resistant Grain Insects (Eradication Funds) Amendment Bill.
2. Supply Bill.

ACTS AMENDMENT (SOIL CONSERVATION) BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 5 May.

MR McPHARLIN (Mt. Marshall) [11.17 a.m.]: While speaking on this Bill last night I referred to soil conservation district advisory committees and some of the letters I have received from various councils in my electorate making reference to those committees.

The Cunderdin Shire Council made a couple of points. Firstly, it feels that the appointment of people to those committees other than the appointment of the departmental nominees should be the responsibility of councils. Secondly, it feels that the district fund referred to by the Minister in his second reading speech as having potential to attract Commonwealth and State funds, should be clarified, and the council has requested a clear and legal responsibility to cover both Governments.

The Wongan Ballidu Shire Council expressed in its letter to me, as did other councils, that it supports the establishment of soil conservation district committees, but raised a question in regard to the levying of the rate. When the provisions of the Bill become known to councils, I feel they will look at the legislation in a more favourable light.

The letter I received from the Great Eastern Ward Shire Councils' Association made the point that the association believes local authorities should be able to make an input to the implementation of the legislation; and in fact that input would be vital to the successful

implementation of the legislation to ensure that each council is represented properly on the district committees. Again I feel that, when the legislation is revealed in total, any fears people have in regard to representation on these committees will be allayed. The letter further states—

The Act provides for the District Advisory Committee to recommend the levy of a rate to the Minister, therefore, it is considered that the Committee should have the same right to decide on expenditure of money in the "Soil Conservation District Fund".

I would not think that great problems will be found in regard to that matter. The letter continues—

The District Advisory Committee does not appear to be restricted to a time limit for imposing a rate.

There should be a termination limit under that provision to enable the crasure of the rate, and I imagine that no great difficulty will be encountered.

The functions of the committees are fairly well outlined. Of course, they have important functions to perform, and the farmers and others who will be involved with those committees will be aware of the particular problems in their districts and be able to make appropriate recommendations when they see a need for an improvement in an area. When such a need is perceived the committees are to advise on the action to be taken relating to the efficient carrying into effect of the provisions of the legislation so that they will be effective. Advisory committees also have a responsibility to consider and report upon methods of land management and land utilisation within their districts. A further function is to advise on the development and promotion of land use programmes within their soil conservation districts, and in most areas the local people are conscious of the need for proper and efficient land management to counter salt encroachment and salinity.

A further responsibility of these committees is to consider and report upon any matters relating to land use, degradation, or soil conservation referred to them by the Minister or the commissioner; and that is an important function. Further, they are to make recommendations to, and consult with, the commissioner as to any works, research, and experimental or educational programmes which may be necessary or desirable in their soil conservation districts. Again, that is a very important function.

The advisory committees must be aware of the land degradation in their areas and how it can be controlled, and how it can be prevented in the future.

The committees are to make recommendations to the Minister as to whether a rate should be imposed under proposed section 25A (1) of the legislation in respect of land within their soil conservation districts, and as to the appropriate amount of any such rate. The rate to be imposed is a contentious issue and has been referred to by a number of people, and by members of shire councils. They have asked whether a rate ought to be struck. Of course, it is only upon the recommendation of a committee that a rate will be struck; and, under the provisions of the legislation, consultation with shire councils is required. If a rate is struck and money is raised the amount received will be credited to an account on behalf of the soil conservation district from which that money was obtained; and the money will be applied to that district only, and after consultation with the shire council and the advisory committee. The provisions relating to those funds will enable the committees to work effectively, and should meet with the approval of the people the provisions will affect. Some of the shires in my electorate have stated that if the interest on money advanced or the money raised is not spent in the districts in which the money was raised, they will not approve any rate; but I think their fears are allayed by the provisions of the legislation.

Newspaper reports from time to time have indicated that as a result of erosion parts of the State will develop into great dust bowls and eventually finish up like the Sahara Desert. That is an exaggeration. When one knows the landholders' concerned, one can accept that they will not allow such things to occur. As I have stated previously, they are far more aware of the need these days to practise better management techniques and to control erosion and degradation for their benefit as well as for the benefit of the State than any person not involved as closely with the land as they are.

I do not share the views of those who say that our soil is being murdered, or whatever. These days better information in regard to soil conservation is being disseminated, and that information is being used to employ methods to prevent erosion and degradation. The people who raise alarm by their statements are not fully conscious of the action being taken by the people living in the valuable landholding areas of this State.

The aspect of appeals has been commented on by the shires. When an aggrieved person makes an appeal to the Minister, under the Bill, it is referred to a committee pursuant to section 39A of this Act for its advice. On that committee are an officer of the Public Service employed in the Department of Conservation and Environment, and a person who is actively engaged in agriculture, horticulture, and pastoral pursuits. That is a very worthy appointment to the committee as this person would have an understanding in regard to the control of soil degradation. The third officer is an officer of the Public Service of the State employed in the Department of Agriculture other than in the division of resource management.

The Bill states that the Minister's decision is final. After the committee thoroughly examines the complaint and the appeal, the matter is sent back to the Minister. That has always raised the question of whether or not a provision of that nature ought to be in any legislation. Other Acts which are in operation provide for this. There is probably an argument for and against this because a Minister can be rather flexible in his judgment without any charge, whereas if it is to go to a court, it is an expensive exercise entailing the employment of legal officers and a hearing before a court presided over by a judge. The provision that the Minister's decision is final has worked in other legislation.

I was advised by a solicitor friend of mine that when anybody says that a Minister is above the law in cases of this nature, that is a misconstruction of the law. No person is above the law. That provision has worked successfully in other Acts and there is no reason that it should not work in this Act.

I could go on quoting a lot of figures about percentage increases of degradation in shire council areas and the procedures recommended by various groups in relation to methods of controlling salinity and so on, but those matters are understood by members, particularly those involved in country areas, who have taken the time to look into this matter.

I hope that when an advisory committee to the Minister is appointed a representative of those organisations will be on it because each of those people has something to contribute and the selection of committee members will be a very important aspect. No doubt, the names of nominees will be submitted by the farmer organisations before a final selection is made. It should result in the best person available with knowledge and practical experience which will

contribute towards the successful operation of the soil conservation provisions under the Act.

We are all concerned about this matter. We need the co-operation of the shire councils, farmers, and Government departments before the successful operation of the proposals can be assured. This measure has my support and I hope it proves to be successful.

MR BRIDGE (Kimberley) [11.30 a.m.]: I am sure most members of the Parliament welcome the measures contained in the Bill now before the House. Soil conservation measures designed to preserve the environment are very close to the hearts of most Australians. We have had many reasons to be concerned about this matter. Many Australians have seen the effects which have occurred in many areas in relation to land degradation.

I am very happy to be able to say at the outset that I support the measures contained in this Bill. I expect I will differ on some aspects of the Bill especially in relation to the application of these measures, but I am sure it will be well received by the community and especially by those people who are directly involved in those measures to ensure there is no further degradation of land in our State.

I note comments advanced in this debate by other members who have spoken. The member for Warren suggested there could be a considerable amount of concern by landowners about degradation of land; indeed, he believed that most of them would have attempted to ensure as best they could that this trend did not continue. I question that proposition, given the evidence of certain landowners or landholders in the Kimberley. There has been a lack of proper managerial application by pastoralists in relation to resolving this problem.

The member for Mt. Marshall suggested a moment ago that those who are intending to promote the proposition that degradation of land could ultimately lead to dust bowls in this State were exaggerating. I differ with the member for Mt. Marshall on that proposition because it is a fact that in areas where there has been extreme land erosion and degradation, we have that very situation.

Mr McPharlin: That was in the past, though.

Mr BRIDGE: That could be the case. I will comment on the last 20 years. I do not argue that a positive attempt to resolve this problem is not being made by landowners today. The realisation and the understanding in our society that something must be done has made a lot of people take positive action in regard to preserving areas

of pastoral pursuits as well as farming areas. Approximately 20 years ago in the Ord River regeneration area one could travel through it and see that it was covered with growth and a lot of grass.

One saw very small areas of soil erosion on the banks of rivers; for example, the Ord River did indeed have large numbers of cattle graze in the areas which we refer to as the river frontages. Generally, in areas of good soil and vegetation growth one will find many stock grazing. When the Government made a decision to resume that area it did so because of the extent of soil erosion. It was a decision that should have been made many years earlier. However, once the decision was made a programme was put into effect by the Department of Agriculture to restore the growth in the Ord River catchment area. That programme has resulted in a fair amount of success. There is no doubt that in many areas of the Ord River considerable re-establishment of growth has occurred and I would expect in successive years of that programme total regrowth will take place.

However, at this stage, there are still many areas on the Ord where there has been no growth at all and there has been a total degradation of the topsoil to the point where it is barren. In spite of the fact that we have had ongoing programmes of regeneration in that area for some 20-odd years this has occurred. The programme has included the destocking of pastures. Everything has been available to the department to enable it to re-establish growth in that area. Yet, despite the enormous amount of money that has been spent over the years—work, application, equipment, and personnel—we still find today that in some areas no growth at all has occurred. I suggest that in those areas we have to question the land element. There is no doubt that in the early stages of development of these properties growth was excellent. The number of cattle that the area supported would suggest that.

I remember old-timers—my father and uncle and other pastoralists—mustering on the Ord and it was not an uncommon sight to see 2 000 head of cattle mustered onto camps. I doubt very much whether one would find that situation occurring in the area today. In times since then the deterioration and erosion on the Ord became so bad that the cattle moved to other accessible areas in search of fodder. That is a classic example of the total disregard of the need for control of pastures. They should be controlled in such a way that this sort of soil erosion does not occur. In that regard I am critical also of the attitude on the man on the land. This point has been

advanced during the debate; however we must take it further. The blame ought not to lie only with the landholders, but the whole question of soil erosion is something that is a community responsibility—not just the responsibility of pastoralists.

It is clear that in some areas there has been a measure of disregard for proper control. If stock numbers were regulated it would ensure this type of deterioration did not occur. It is this area that prompts me to question one aspect of the Bill before the House. Clause 25 provides for an account to be established to provide funding to enable measures to be undertaken where it is found that this type of scheme is necessary. The Government should spell out more clearly its commitment to this funding. While certain pastoralists may well be blamed for their attitudes towards this sort of measure, the Government needs to accept that in the general situation it is a community responsibility.

Under this Bill one landowner could have his area declared suddenly. However, a pastoralist or farmer who has a property adjoining the declared property may have made serious attempts to supervise his land. With the declaration of the first property, a levy may be imposed upon the owner of the second property, and we can understand his reaction to being called upon to contribute to the programme.

As the member for Mt. Marshall indicated, some people are interested in the preservation of their soil, and they make a definite and serious attempt to do something about the problem. However, others do not do this, and these are the people upon whom the levies should be imposed. In the Ord River area the Department of Agriculture makes equipment available to pastoralists who are prepared to undertake measures to prevent soil erosion and a positive attempt has been made in this regard. The people who have been prepared to help themselves should not bear the brunt of the great costs which would be involved in the areas referred to.

In parts of this State the land is still deteriorating despite our awareness of the problem. We must concentrate on soil conservation—if we do not, the effects to the nation will be disastrous. Frequently we talk about the wonderful country in which we live; that is quite true. Its tremendous pastoral areas are capable of enormous productivity, but land degradation must be watched closely. The Ord River station was one of the finest properties in the Kimberley.

Mr Old: It still is.

Mr BRIDGE: I am referring to the time when it was being run as a pastoral station. The adjoining properties—Turner River station, the Old Flora River Valley, and places such as Mistake Creek—were recognised as some of the best areas in the Kimberley. However, one would not rate them so highly now as pastoral areas.

Land degradation can have a devastating effect upon the industry, and, particularly the beef industry which needs a great deal of support. It is in this area that the Government's funding commitment should be greater. It is one thing for the Government to say that soil conservation is important and that stern measures are necessary, but it is another thing for it to show an initiative that will encourage the type of support that we are seeking from the man on the land.

The pastoral industry has gone from a period of reasonably good prices to good prices, to not-so-good prices, to low prices, and to very low prices. Currently, the prices being obtained in the Kimberley for beef are in the not-so-good category. Certainly beef prices are not in the very low category, but nonetheless the Kimberley pastoralists are finding things very tough at the present time. Cattle prices are fluctuating severely and there is a continual spiral of operational costs.

The cost of operating a property is forever increasing, and the man on the land is facing enormous problems. The Government must legislate to demonstrate a positive and firm commitment to assist the industry. One way to do that is by a clear commitment of financial support. That must come. Proposed new section 25B of the Bill provides for the setting up of a fund. I would ask the Minister to comment on this part of the Bill and the possibility of a greater financial commitment on the part of the Government. That is most essential.

I am not able to speak about the farming areas of the State; I am no expert in that field. However, I claim to understand the utilisation of the land in areas such as the Kimberley, and particularly pastoral land. I noted the comments of members today, and while we may differ on our ideas about the application of some of the measures contained in the Bill, broadly speaking, I am sure everyone welcomes the legislation wholeheartedly.

I would like to comment briefly on my reasons for believing that this is a timely measure. Members will remember that last year I criticised a Bill which permitted the actual size of pastoral holdings to be enlarged. In my speech at that time I raised the point that by enlarging the size of

holdings we would increase the problems we are now discussing. The larger a property is, the more difficult soil conservation becomes. That is an elementary point. I am not suggesting that properties should be so small that they are not viable, but in general terms, provided the soil on a property is good, the smaller the property is, the better chance there is to rotate stock so that vegetation may re-establish itself and the topsoil remain protected.

Let us consider the case of a pastoral lease of over one million acres under one management. It is not possible physically to rotate stock so that the land is managed efficiently. The fears that I raised last year will be realised. The soil conservation concept implicit in the legislation before us will prove effective in some areas, but in areas such as the Kimberley it will be impossible to apply the scheme effectively. That is the problem that I see.

The intentions of this measure are good, but it will not be a workable proposition to implement them in some parts of the State. A vast part of the pastoral industry is in this area to which I have referred. Unfortunately some people think that for something to be economic it must be big. That belief is contrary to the feelings of many people in the pastoral industry. We have always taken the view that if one's area can be contained, it can be developed through regular stock rotation and properly supervised conservation measures. This will ensure a continued natural regrowth. Unfortunately that will not happen in many areas of the Kimberley. Certainly we are aware of the need for land preservation, but this Government is encouraging large holdings, and I have referred already to the legislation the Government introduced last year. That policy will be counterproductive.

In the farming areas of the State, many holdings are worked totally by the landowners. I believe that in those areas the scheme will prove successful. However, it will not have the same measure of success in areas where the holdings are larger.

I hope that the Government will look upon land conservation as a community responsibility rather than the responsibility only of the landowner involved. The Government needs to make a funding commitment to demonstrate that it does have a philosophy that land conservation should be a community responsibility.

We all ought to be committed to the control of land degradation. Apart from the benefits to the man on the land, which would be enormous, the nation as a whole has an obligation to ensure that we have no further erosion. It cannot be said that

the attitude of farmers, pastoralists, mining companies, and a lot of other people has not led to this situation. We ought not kid ourselves about that. Many people have been ignorant of the need to examine their control of pastoral properties. Other people have been conscious of the need; and this consciousness goes back for many years.

I remember that when I was a young man people in my area spoke about the need for measures to be taken. This has not been a one-way exercise by people who have not cared, and who have abused and exploited the land. Some people have been conscious of the problem.

However, we need to have greater awareness. By way of an interjection yesterday, the member for Gascoyne made the comment which illustrates the extent to which many people are not aware of land degradation. He spoke about fires as having some effect upon land. Anybody who knows anything at all about land conservation would know that controlled burning is one of the most effective measures in the control and preservation of land. It is an established fact that the areas subject to controlled burning are not subject to any land degradation. However, that proposition was advanced by way of interjection; and that shows the total lack of understanding of the member.

Mr Grewar: He might have been referring to a different situation—vegetation near unstable sand dunes where you can get redevelopment.

Mr BRIDGE: I understood controlled burning to be a fundamental aspect of soil conservation. I would regard the member's comment as an indication of a lack of appreciation of the necessary measures.

I support the proposals in this Bill. No doubt, given proper application, they will be beneficial to the State, and they will be welcomed generally by most people who have any regard to land conservation. I indicate that, despite the slight difficulties we may have with certain aspects of the Bill, in broad terms I support the measure.

MR GREWAR (Roe) [11.58 a.m.]: This is, without doubt, the most important piece of legislation we have had before us this session. How we handle land degradation from now will affect generations to come in this State and in Australia.

I am pleased the amendments have been proposed. They will make the Act more functional and more realistic under the present land use system. While the basic structure of the parent Act appeared to be quite sound, it had omissions; because of those omissions it was, in the main, ineffectual. However, I am concerned that the

wrath of the old Act should have been felt more firmly by people who were being neglectful. The examples of this neglect can be seen everywhere. The soil is our most important basic asset; in too many cases it has been neglected.

Australia being centred on the Tropic of Capricorn, where most of the world's deserts seem to lie, is located in possibly the worst latitudes in the world for agriculture. It is located also with its long axis in an east-west direction. As a result, we have a very arid climate with agriculture possible only on the extreme margins in the north, east, and south. Even in those areas, our rainfall is variable, unreliable, and unpredictable. The areas are subject to floods and droughts, unfortunately, with a strong seasonal influence. For long periods of the year our vegetation is dry and frequently heavily grazed, thus affording no protection to the soil against the action of wind or water. In Western Australia, southern areas of the State are also exposed to strong prevailing winds, which have a dramatic effect on soils without much cover.

In the south-western part of the State, nature was also unkind in leaving us with the residual soils that had been formed in past climatic periods—soils of which the processes of formation were so severe that they lost a great deal of their chemical fertility, and which were extreme enough to leach out the clay from the surface layers and deposit it down in the profile. As a result, these soils are very poor in chemical fertility and physical properties, notably the structure.

Two-thirds of the soils of the south-west have a sandy topsoil which, in combination with the dry and windy climate, is prone to blow, especially during periods of cultivation, cropping, or at the end of a long, dry summer period.

I take objection to the remarks by a previous speaker who said that these light soils possibly should not have been released for agriculture. These soils represent two-thirds of our agricultural soils; and without their development, this State would be much poorer economically. Even during the drought of the last five years, the lighter soils performed better than the heavier soils, as they were able to utilise the lighter rainfall that we received. Therefore, they are very important in the economy of this State.

In some parts of the south coastal areas in the last few years, regrettably we have had some quite major wind erosion problems. Figures for soil destruction in the Jerramungup and Esperance areas have been quoted; and we have seen a lot of crop damage. Some farmers have sustained great

losses. Those who did not sustain losses left the soil alone once it started to blow. They let nature take its course; and weeds and other species took over. However, many farmers did not do that. They continued to recultivate and reseed their land, in some cases two and three times, reducing the soil structure to a fine tilth which blew much too readily. The result was the erosion damage that was mentioned.

It is not only the light soils in this State that are prone to wind erosion. Even our heavier soils, which are still not highly fertile and do not have a good structure, are frequently subject to wind erosion, and water erosion as well, in situations where they are overcultivated or overgrazed.

Soil degradation does not begin or end with wind or water erosion. We have a serious salinity problem which has developed in southern areas since the land was alienated and cleared. As a result of countless thousands of years of deposition of cyclic salt in our soils, this has accumulated in the profile. The native vegetation was in balance with the climate and soil, and everything was well under control. However, that salt has been mobilised further down the profile, as we have had more water moving down due to its not being used by our pasture species.

This is now concentrating itself in the lower slopes and is manifested in salt lakes, seepages, saline drainages, and in other ways. Increasing salinity has brought about a degree of loss of production in this State by despoiling land. Despite low rainfall, it has had an effect also on the amount of water erosion. Saline soil flocculates easily, it does not contain protective vegetation, and, therefore, it is eroded easily.

In the wet areas of this State, especially the northern Kimberley areas about which we have heard, and also in the southern part of this State which has an undulating topography, water erosion has been severe. It is necessary to exercise care with our agriculture.

We are dealing with soil and climate factors which mitigate against stable agricultural practice. Already much damage has been done in the short history of agriculture, but, with our present knowledge and concern, control measures will become more effective in the future.

In the past, agricultural practices have had to be exploitive. In their initial developmental stages, particularly in regard to clearing land, farmers had to get as much income as possible from the land. However, in the main, the exploitive phase of our agricultural system has past and hopefully correction of damage will be possible now.

After 150 years, we are now cognizant of the fragile environment in which our agricultural system works. Over the years, hundreds of thousands of acres have been destroyed by salinity, wind, and water erosion.

Mr Tonkin: I did not think that was the point of the interjection you made the other day on the member for Warren. I thought you were saying it had been going on for many years and you could not blame the Government for the drought.

Several members interjected.

Mr GREWAR: The signs of soil degradation are not always very obvious and this was proved recently by a soil scientist who showed very dramatically that it is not always evident from sand movement that it has occurred. The chemical fertility of the soil often can be largely lost before the sand starts to blow. It was shown that, even under very light wind conditions, the dust component of the soil was removed and that contains the most important nutrients.

Mr Pearce: Is it true that the winds at Esperance are so strong that they blow little, woolly lambs away from their mothers, as alleged by the previous Minister for Education at a meeting in Geraldton?

Mr GREWAR: The interjector should go down to Esperance and have a look at some of the problems there. The amendments in the Bill embrace a wider area than that covered by the parent Act and hopefully they will bring about a cessation of much of the soil and land degeneration we have experienced in the past and also will result in the implementation of preventive control measures in the future.

The definition of "soil degradation" leaves no doubt as to the functions of the Act. The legislation will remain the responsibility of the Minister for Agriculture and that is logical, because the Department of Agriculture is best able to administer such an Act. Over a great number of years it has been involved in the problems of research into and control of soil degradation. However, not only has the agricultural discipline been involved in this area, but also other disciplines are concerned about and involved in study and research into this matter.

As constituted in the Bill, the soil conservation advisory committee will have 10 members, four of whom will almost certainly be primary producers or people with an agricultural bias, and one of whom will be a shire councillor who probably will have some knowledge of the practice of agriculture. This 10-member committee will replace the 12-member committee which operated under the parent Act.

Some farmers are concerned that they do not have adequate representation on the committee, but I believe that the five practical farmers on the committee should meet the needs of farmers, because they will be able to express their points of views strongly. This is an advisory committee and it is essential that different areas of expertise are represented on it. A number of disciplines work in the field of salinity control, including the Forests Department, the Public Works Department and the Department of Agriculture. The PWD is involved in hydrological studies in catchment areas and the Forests Department carries out research into the effects of vegetation on wind velocity and soil moisture usage.

The primary producers on the committee will make a very valuable contribution to its functions.

In the area of land degradation, frequently a finger is pointed at primary producers as being the ones who have caused the bulk of the problems, but such is not always the case. Obviously, the work of the Main Roads Department in the location of its drainage systems, frequently leads water into areas of weakness—for example, into a valley—resulting in the subsequent development of gullies. We also have seen clear felling carried out in forests which has led to erosion, and the way in which the mining industry has laid bare the soil surface has led to land degradation.

The committee will be cognizant of the fact that much work has been done in relation to soil degradation, but it will be aware also that a great deal remains to be done. We should be involved in research into plant species which will provide a more satisfactory replacement for native vegetation than was available in the past, especially in the utilisation of soil moisture and preventing its moving down into the profile.

It is important that Government departments do not hinder activities in this area as occurred in the case of the non-release of new lucerne varieties, because of problems it might cause in the proliferation of bacterial wilt. However, it is evident the problems surrounding soil erosion and water usage are much greater than those experienced in regard to that particular disease.

Plant species used—clover and grasses—do not efficiently enable maximum water usage, particularly in areas with a high water table. It is essential that research be carried out into the development of deep-rooted, perennial, or long-life annual plants which can utilise water more efficiently. Lucerne falls into this category; however, only one variety is suitable for the climatic conditions in the areas where it is

required and, under selective, hard grazing pressure, it soon disappears. Surely a plant of this special character is available or, if not, it could be bred in order that it may perform the functions we require of it. Such plants are extremely valuable in utilising moisture and when their root systems disintegrate, channels remain which enable the water to percolate downwards. This would stop the subsoil sealing off, which allows water to flood across the surface causing erosion.

Not only is it a function of the commissioner to initiate prosecutions but also he must make available the very best types of technology for use by primary producers.

The Department of Agriculture's soil division has done a great deal of work on wind erosion, a problem which has escalated to serious proportions since the light soils of the south coast and the midlands areas have been developed over the last 20 or 25 years. These soils, on clearing, contain a lot of natural vegetation residues, which bind the soils together so that the effects of wind are not damaging. When this land was cleared in earlier years, we did not realise the problems with which we would be faced today. With cultivation and the sowing of pastures, this natural binding material has rotted away and we have been left with a soil of a single-grain structure which is very easily mobile, especially during times of cropping or when under pressure from grazing in our late summer.

Techniques devised overseas have shown that by stubble mulching and the retention of residues, this soil can be kept reasonably stable. The Department of Agriculture's work with a wind tunnel has proved this. Techniques have been developed utilising chemicals to control weeds and more recently we have had an adaption for combines in the form of press wheels which allow more compression on the soil, which protects the seeds and the young plants. This helps to lessen wind damage to young crops.

Notwithstanding all this, someone must look at our soil structure problem now which, after 25 years or more of farming, has not much binding material left. Research must be undertaken to look at either a natural clay material or a synthetic material to bind the soil. I myself have tried the addition of one inch of clay incorporated with three inches of surface sand, and this has resulted in a reasonably structured soil.

The Department of Agriculture should be looking at this concept. While it is costly, it is not all that costly when we consider the long-term damage to our agricultural land if we do not have these control measures. The commissioner has

wide functions and powers which allow him to direct where research efforts should be made and where Government and other moneys should be spent. I trust these Government moneys, both Federal and State, are generous, for it is in the national interest that we control our soil degradation. It is all very well to have a primary producer deal with his own small problem; however, when it comes to the broader issue of salinity of soils or the wide scope of wind erosion, we realise that the problem is beyond the individual or even a group of individuals.

I shall deal now with salinity and drainage. Following the development of our countryside, the drainage areas in the main have become affected by salt. The natural process is that water percolates down the soil and gravitates to lower areas, finally to reach the sea through these drainage lines. This is a fairly slow process and the water moves only a few metres a year. Work done with drainage on small-scale areas by private farmers and the Department of Agriculture indicates the excavated drainage systems allow a speeding up of the water's movement.

In one of the broad valleys of the wheatbelt where salinity is a problem a control could be set up using agricultural pipes, even to the extent of pumping these areas in order to speed up the water's movement. A large amount of land is presently affected by salinity, but we have yet to reach the end of our problems. The most fertile soil areas could be affected, so everything must be done to maintain their fertility. I admit that the cost would be horrendous.

Perhaps measurements could be taken in a selected valley prior to any drainage work being carried out to establish the present balance of salinity in the soil. The area could then be drained and a further study carried out to ascertain how much salt is being removed, and at what cost. This could lead to a consideration of further drainage schemes throughout the south-west of the State.

The Minister has given his assurance that Federal and State funds will be forthcoming, but we need something more positive than a mere assurance. I know in the past the Government has helped in major problem areas. However, it is one thing to expect a primary producer to foot his own bill, but it is another thing altogether for the Government, in the national interest, to be ready and willing to assist. Some positive statement should be forthcoming from the Government about a Government allocation to assist in resolving the problem of soil degradation.

The concept of district soil conservation committees is contained in the parent Act. This amendment spells out more clearly what can be done and includes a stronger definition of the functions of such committees. These committees will be made up of people at the grass roots of the agricultural industry; they will be mostly primary producers who are aware of district problems. They will be able to liaise with their fellow farmers and with the commissioner. They will play a very important function in identifying local problem areas, studying the effect of various techniques that may be applied locally, reporting on the district's wellbeing, and advising on land use programmes that may result.

A most important amendment allows for the introduction of a rating system. I hate rating systems, having seen a vermin rate imposed with which most primary producers were not happy and which they were happy to see disappear. It is my belief that vermin problems and some of our soil degradation problems arise on individual farmer's own properties and therefore should be the individual's responsibility to correct. However, there are instances, especially with salinity, when the problem does not begin and end on an individual farm and, in fact, may cover an entire catchment area. In these cases I can see a justification for a rating system if it embraces all farmers in that catchment area.

I am glad that fines have been upgraded. The soil is our basic asset and anyone who abuses it is deserving of a fine. The amounts decided on are realistic and will bring about a consciousness among those farmers who may be tardy in ensuring that work on farms is done more carefully. I trust that the commissioner will act positively—not as we have seen under the parent Act—to retain our soils in good condition. Agriculture will not be here just for decades, but for cons of time. We must do everything positive to preserve our soils.

I support the Bill.

MR TUBBY (Greenough) [12.24 p.m.]: I, too, view these amendments to the Act as being very important. They will have a tremendous bearing and influence on the developed areas of Western Australia. As the Minister said in his second reading speech, Western Australians have regarded soil and water salinity, wind and water erosion, and other degradation problems as the inevitable price to be paid for agricultural expansion and prosperity. Today it has been well proved that these problems need not be the price of our developing our land. It has been emphasised more than ever that legislation of this type should be implemented when a great national

asset is involved so that highly productive soils in our State will be protected.

Our landholders realise that they handle a limited and valuable commodity, and I believe that to protect our soils the time is opportune to implement provisions such as those included in this legislation. In that endeavour we will have the full co-operation of landholders.

The declaration of specific areas as having specific problems is very important because the problems are not restricted to accepted boundaries. Salinity may create a problem on one farm, but the reason for that creation is neglect on the part of an adjoining landholder, or the fact that something to control salinity has not been carried out on an adjoining farm. The same situation applies from one shire to another.

The involvement of landholders in these soil conservation district advisory committees will be tremendously important. Landholders are great individualists; they farm their own properties in their own ways and have differing opinions as to what is the correct course to take in the prevention of the degradation of soils.

It is important also to have consultation on conservation measures recommended by the State or the local committees. My electorate would have just about all the problems that can be associated with land degradation generally. We have salinity on heavy soil, water erosion on heavy and light soils, wind erosion on light land in the farming areas, and sand dunes along the vast coastal area of my electorate. In my area quite a number of areas will be declared for the handling of conservation problems.

The great problem I envisage will be the handling of the fragile areas along the coast and the prevention of an extension of the tremendous sand dunes which I see each week as I fly between Geraldton and Perth.

The legislation provides for varying committees to be established to handle the declared areas; naturally certain committees will be established to handle heavy soil areas, and others will be established to handle light soil areas. I wonder who will have the responsibility for handling the tremendous areas of sand dunes along our coastal strip, areas which are generally vested in the Crown. These areas are indeed very fragile. It was mentioned this morning that fire can be of great assistance in the control of the degradation of soil, but in areas where sand dunes are present fire could be devastating. During the period the dunes would lie bare after a fire the sand would drift, and that can be impossible to control.

The levying of a rate by shires in order to cover the expenses associated with a declared district is a good move, but I do view the degradation of soil and its protection to be not merely the problem of the private landowners affected, but as well a problem for this nation to solve—the areas in question are national assets and should be protected for future generations. Landholders of today in reality are only tenants. Our agricultural areas are national assets and by all means should be protected.

The formation of a State committee with balanced representation is indeed a good move, and the input of each area of representation will lead to favourable decisions being made by that committee. The formation of local committees should incorporate shire representation, and representation from the Public Works Department and the Main Roads Department. Various types of control will involve each department. Water erosion will involve the Main Roads Department and local road sections of shire councils. The declaration of areas means that control measures will cost shires and the Main Roads Department a great deal more, and it is important that on a local basis input is received from both sectors responsible for our roads.

In recent times vastly improved methods have been implemented to protect soils, and in the main this has been carried out by farmers by way of their methods of farming. The days of valuable land being left idle are quickly disappearing, and the days of cleaning all rubbish and trash from the surface of the soil before cropping are fast disappearing. The days have come when as much residue as possible is left on the surface of the soil, and in the long term this will mean great benefits to our agricultural areas as a result of the texture improvement in our heavy soils, which in turn will reflect a better control of salinity and water run-off problems.

Although these improved farming methods have not been implemented for long enough to show the accumulated problems that can take place with the build up of disease, they are an improvement, and the Department of Agriculture has the competence to handle resultant problems.

I received a letter referring to this legislation from only one shire in my area, and that is the Mullewa Shire Council which expressed concern for certain provisions of the legislation and suggested that in the representation on the State body two members of the shire councils' association should be represented. The council believes the burden of the implementation of the proposed policy will fall largely in the lap of shire councils, and therefore they should have

additional representation on the State body. The council strongly supports the proposition that the Main Roads Department and the Public Works Department be represented on district advisory committees, and that locally it is not necessary to have a representative from the Primary Industry Association of W.A. (Inc.) or the Pastoralists and Graziers Association of WA (Inc.). The council believes that such representatives should be appointed to the State body, but that local people would be more suitable for district committees.

It is proposed that certain powers be given to the advisory committee to co-ordinate the activities of the local actively involved groups. The members of the groups would be elected from within their own areas by the landholders. They express concern at the section relating to the collection of funds. This section provides for the preparation and auditing of funds and books of account; however, it does not appear to provide for any accountability of the districts in which these funds were raised. Ratepayers should be given the opportunity to inspect annual statements, if only through the advisory committee. They should retain the funds and apply them as they see fit with the commissioner's approval. That was the only shire that expressed any comment on the information that was sent out requesting an input in relation to the new amendments.

It is very important that the provisions are in the Act to allow an appeal to the Minister. The Minister's decision will be guided by the advisory committee that will be appointed, problems will arise and landholders may not be prepared to co-operate for various reasons. They may perhaps disagree with the type of recommendation that has been given in relation to the particular problem, or may generally desire not to co-operate in any way that will prohibit them from carrying out their normal pattern of farming which, perhaps in the past, has stood by them well. A farmer may disagree with methods that will be implemented to improve the type of operation he has been carrying out.

The other points of interest have been covered by previous speakers, so I will conclude my remarks by saying I think this is a very important piece of legislation in regard to the methods of implementation recommended in the Act. It will be of great benefit to Western Australia, and this is the most opportune time for it to be implemented.

MR COWAN (Merredin) [12.38 p.m.]: The practice, or lack of it, of soil conservation has been with us for a long time. We have to look only at the date on which the Act was proclaimed to

realise that. In the mid 1970s the Commonwealth and State Governments decided to establish a Government working party to try to present a basis on or a level around which a plan for soil conservation could be established. The report of that working party was published in 1978 and came up with some rather startling figures about the extent of soil degradation in all parts of Australia, but particularly the Eastern States. Western Australia was examined and there was evidence to show that the level of degradation in this State quite clearly called for the Soil Conservation Act to be implemented. Subsequently, there has been growing concern by people in the areas I represent to have the Soil Conservation Act implemented. This was evidenced in 1981 when the Merredin Shire invited representatives of neighbouring shires to attend a meeting between delegates and the previous soil conservation commissioner. At that meeting delegates made a request to have the Soil Conservation Act implemented. They also requested that the Act be implemented in a way that would provide local authorities and people within the community the opportunity to have some input or say in relation to soil conservation practices in their area.

Perhaps one of the reasons they wanted that was because they desired to demonstrate that they were prepared voluntarily to do something about soil conservation within their own region. I am sure that the effects of the Country Areas Water Supply Act amendment in relation to declared catchment areas prompted them to give a clear indication to the Government that they wanted a greater degree of soil conservation practised in their area and desired to have their own local involvement.

Subsequent meetings were held with the Director of Agriculture, the Minister, and other people who expressed their desire to do something practical about conservation. Eventually, this group formed a 14-shire organisation. Off the top of my head, I cannot give its correct title, but in the absence of something better, I will call it the "eastern districts soil conservation group". This group has worked very hard and it should take some credit in seeing its efforts have reached some degree of achievement with the amendments now before the House.

As I see the amendments, they have two important functions: one is to broaden the definition of "soil degradation", and the other is to give the local communities an opportunity to become more directly involved in soil conservation practices that will be undertaken within the areas in which they live or farm. There are some other

functions of this Bill which I would like to raise, but it is an appropriate time for me to finish and deal with them after the luncheon adjournment.

Sitting suspended from 12.45 p.m. to 2.16 p.m.

Mr COWAN: Earlier, I mentioned some of the provisions in the amending Bill. Apart from the changes in the definition of "soil degradation", perhaps the most important factor in the Bill is the power of rating, and what that implies is that if a primary producer or the people in a particular area wished to carry out soil conservation practices, they will have the privilege of paying for it. I do not take any great exception to that, because it is fair enough, provided of course there is some form of matching fund from State or Commonwealth Governments. This is provided for in the amendment, but there is no specific obligation on the Government to make the payments.

Most of my comments will be more appropriate in the Committee stage of the Bill, but I do have some minor criticisms of the legislation. It has been felt that this type of legislation should come under the responsibility of the Minister for Conservation and the Environment rather than the Minister for Agriculture. I have no preference, but I know that most primary producers feel quite satisfied that it is better to have this legislation come under the auspices of the Minister for Agriculture.

The primary producers have expressed some views on the powers of the Commissioner of Soil Conservation. They believe it is not absolutely necessary for him to be directly responsible to the Director of Agriculture. They believe he should be directly responsible to the Minister, and the Minister alone. Of major importance to them is the input the commissioner will make.

I have stated before publicly that previous commissioners have been offered that position as a post prior to retirement and very few have put into effect the powers that were contained in the Soil Conservation Act.

I can remember that in 1974 a local authority which I represent made a request for something to be done about a problem within the Shire of Naremburn. The request resulted in a deputation and visit from the Minister, the director, and the commissioner. Nothing happened as a result of those visits because everyone found it a little too difficult to implement the powers that were contained within the Act.

I hope that the current commissioner is prepared to ensure that the provisions made, not only in this Bill, but also in the principal Act, are utilised fully.

Criticism has been made about the level of consultation between the people who are to be affected by this Bill and those responsible for its drafting. I can ascertain by just looking at the Bill that there has been a level of consultation with the producer organisations, and it is quite plain that there has been a change made to the Bill itself to accommodate the producer organisations. It seems to me that it was rude to exclude local authorities from any input into this legislation, although a rather belated attempt may have been made.

I say that for two reasons: Firstly, it was as a result of the instigation of a group of local authorities within the Merredin area that this Bill was initiated. I am not certain that the Department of Agriculture was seeking an indication from primary producers or from people such as those in local authorities to say to them that they were prepared to ensure that the divisions within the Soil Conservation Act were implemented. That group gave a very clear indication that, in fact, this is what primary producers want. If the Government can consult with producer organisations it can consult with local authorities also. It should not consult local authorities on a last-hour basis, which is what appears to have happened on this occasion.

I am very pleased that the amendments appearing on the notice paper in the Minister's name are amendments which were put forward at a meeting held in the Merredin Shire Council chambers, of those local authorities which were concerned about the failure of the Department of Agriculture and the commissioner to inform them of the proposed legislation. Most of the queries, problems and difficulties experienced by those authorities in relation to the Bill have been covered by the amendments that have been placed on the notice paper. That type of situation should not happen. If that is to be the level of discussion that is to take place before legislation is implemented, there will not be a great deal of confidence in its implementation because no-one will be prepared to accept the spirit in which it was intended to be presented to the public. I hope that in the future both the Minister and the commissioner will make absolutely certain that any proposed amendments are made on the basis of full consultation. As consultation took place with producer organisations at a fairly early stage in the formulation of this Bill, I consider local authorities should have been consulted in the same manner.

Comment already has been made on the role of the district advisory committees and I prefer to leave my comments on this matter to the

Committee stage. Discussion also has taken place on the composition of the soil conservation advisory committee. Some members have indicated that changes should be made to the number of people on the committee. From my point of view it is a policy-making committee and the composition of the committee is reasonable and does not need to be changed. However, there are some people who maintain that the composition should be widened to give a greater degree of expertise; perhaps they could be co-opted or they could be members in their own right. I consider that the people on the committee are experienced in land use and they can present a policy that can be implemented through this legislation.

My colleague, the member for Stirling, probably will spend more time than I in debating appeal matters. I consider there is no point in having an appeal tribunal if it is to operate only in an advisory capacity. I am aware that if anyone believes a person, body, or State department has acted in a particular fashion and indeed erred in law, an appeal can be made to the courts. However, most of the dealings in the case of this Bill will be in relation to matters of fact and there will be no appeal, except to the tribunal, which in fact is only an advisory body. If the Minister wants to have the final say, provision should be made in the Bill to allow his findings, and the reasons for his decision, to be made public. That is the least that could be done. Should the Minister insist that he should have the final say he should be prepared to include such a provision in the Act. In other words, he should be accountable to the public.

In effect, most people support the principle of this Bill. Some people—in particular those associated with local government—have some resentment because there was no great degree of consultation; their participation in the formulation of the Bill was very limited. They should have been asked to make some input and this should have been done in a forum situation where they could have discussed the proposed provisions to be placed in the Bill. In the first place, they were contacted by letter and asked whether they had any comment to make and when the Bill was finally drafted they were contacted again and asked if they objected to the new provisions. Before they could organise a meeting they found that the Bill was before the House and they had very little time in which to arrange a meeting to discuss the various provisions proposed.

The rural public accept this measure in principle and understand what it is about. Really,

all it is doing is defining more broadly the term "soil degradation". It allows small groups to become actively involved in recommending what should be done in areas where soil degradation has occurred and offers them the privilege of paying for the restoration of land to its original, or better, condition.

I support this Bill and will leave most of my comments to the Committee stage.

MR STEPHENS (Stirling) [2.30 p.m.]: The Bill currently before the House is indeed a very important piece of legislation. The Soil Conservation Act has been on the Statute book for many years, but I do not know whether its provisions have been implemented to any great extent. It is history that during the ages of civilisation, when man has failed to look after the soil, his environment has been destroyed. Some of the land has become desert because of this.

I was very pleased to realise that both State and Federal Governments have taken considerable interest in soil conservation for a number of years. The work of a Standing Committee led to the publication of a document by the Research Director of the Department of Environment, Housing, and Community Development in April 1978. This document forms the basis for soil conservation policy in Australia.

This most comprehensive study was undertaken between 1975 and 1977, and it has revealed for the first time the full extent of soil erosion and land degradation throughout the nation. Also, it has put forward practical recommendations to remedy the problems. For any member who is interested in this subject, the document is well worth reading. I realise that we should all be interested in it. The document gives some indication of the extent of our problem, and it says, *inter alia*, on page 135—

Fifty-one per cent of the total area used for agricultural and pastoral purposes in Australia was assessed as needing some form of soil conservation treatment under existing land use. The total value of fixed investment in this area subject to degradation is of the order of \$12 billion.

That is, \$12 billion in 1975 terms. It continues—

The incorporation of sound land management practices into farming and grazing activities is considered to be an appropriate and adequate form of treatment over 44% of this area subject to degradation. This represents 22% of the total area in use. The value of the fixed investment in this land is approximately \$5.3 billion.

So we are referring to an area in which there has been considerable investment. The cost of helping to overcome these problems is outlined also on page 136 of the document as follows—

A survey of land degradation in the non-arid zone carried out in 1970 by the Standing Committee on Soil Conservation estimated the cost of works at \$548 million—

That again relates to 1975 prices. To continue—

The total construction cost of required works of a similar area as assessed in the present study—

That is, in 1978. To continue—

—is \$610... Of the \$610 million assessed as needed for the construction of works New South Wales at \$331 million required almost half; followed by Victoria at \$122 million; Queensland at \$110 million; Western Australia at \$48 million; South Australia at \$50 million; Northern Territory at \$12 million; Tasmania at \$1.44 million;

The bulk of that money is required to be spent in the Eastern States, but it is quite obvious that a substantial amount is required for Western Australia—\$48 million.

The report then goes on to state that once works have been undertaken, an annual maintenance cost is necessary on the lands alone and this is estimated to be in the order of 10 per cent of the capital cost. It is pointed out that it is very hard to quantify the amount of money that will be necessary for work to be undertaken in the dry arid lands, but in so far as the committee was able to quantify the amount, it estimates that the maintenance will cost in the order of \$50 million per annum. So we are dealing with a problem which is of great concern to us, and it will require a considerable capital cost, and a considerable yearly contribution towards maintenance.

I would like to read two other parts of this report. It says on page 1 of the document—

The public view of soil conservation is that it is primarily concerned with methods and practices of management to prevent or control soil erosion on farming and grazing land. In fact, soil conservation activity is much wider in scope and should cover the full range of circumstances in which land degradation occurs.

In the same paragraph we read—

Inappropriate road design and construction often cause degradation, as do poor location, standards and layout of subdivisions. Mining development should be planned and managed so that land degradation is minimised. Soil

conservation principles should also be incorporated in urban planning schemes. Demands on the soil conservation authorities for technical advice and assistance in these non-agricultural activities are increasing.

So it is quite apparent that the problem of soil conservation involves more than just the agricultural community. It involves many sectors of society. For that reason I was very surprised to see that the Government has decided to leave the administration of the Act with the Department of Agriculture. Because of the wide-ranging aspect of soil conservation as outlined in the report, it would be more appropriate for it to be administered by the Department of Conservation and Environment. That is what has happened in Victoria.

Although I will not read it to the House, another part of the report indicates that soil conservation is handled differently by different States. Both Victoria and New South Wales have independent authorities.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Crane): Order! There is too much audible conversation. *Hansard* is having difficulty hearing the member on his feet. I would like the two gentlemen on my right to cease their loud conversation, please.

Mr STEPHENS: I thought I may have been able to speak loudly enough to drown them out. The topic we are discussing is of vital interest to all citizens, and members of this House should be listening.

Mr Pearce: Hear, hear! We are.

Mr STEPHENS: I thought most of the conversation was from the Government side.

Mr Young: I am prepared to be silent, but I do not have to listen.

Mr STEPHENS: The Minister might improve his electoral prospects if he listened occasionally. As I was saying, the issue of soil conservation is handled by the Department of Conservation and Environment in Victoria. The Commissioner of Soil Conservation has direct access to the Minister. It would have been more appropriate for this legislation to be under the control of the WA Department of Conservation and Environment. In fact, it would not have been necessary to alter the Act for that to happen. The long title of the Environmental Protection Act reads as follows—

AN ACT to make provision for the establishment of an Environmental Protection Authority, a Department of Environmental Protection and an Environmental Protection Council for the prevention and control of environmental

pollution and for the protection and enhancement of the environment—

The definition of the word "environment" in that Act is as follows—

"environment" means the physical factors prevailing in the State, including the land, and the coastal waters, sea-bed and subsoil adjacent thereto, water, atmosphere, sound, odours, tastes and radiation, the social factor of aesthetics and all factors affecting animal and plant life;

There would have been no problem in having this legislation come under the Department of Conservation and Environment.

Mr Evans: What about the staffing situation?

Mr STEPHENS: I do not think there would be any problem with staffing. The disciplines that are available to the Department of Conservation and Environment are such that it would be able to handle the work adequately.

Mr Evans: The department has a full rangeland section.

Mr STEPHENS: Sound management practices have a bearing on soil conservation, but I believe the greater problem of restoration more aptly could come under the Department of Conservation and Environment. Soil conservation has a much broader meaning today, as I outlined when I quoted from the document "A Basis for Soil Conservation policy in Australia".

Mr Evans interjected.

Mr STEPHENS: I cannot see that the point the member for Warren is raising creates any real problem. If I may return to the Bill, the fact that the Commissioner of Soil Conservation is responsible to the director, who in turn is responsible to the Minister, is a weakness. I do not intend at this late stage to move an amendment, but I ask the Minister to consider giving the commissioner direct access to the Minister, rather than his having to go through the director. As it stands at the moment we might as well make the director the Commissioner of Soil Conservation. This part of the Bill weakens the commissioner's status.

Another aspect I would like to mention is that it has been recognised that primary producers have traditionally used and managed their land in the manner they chose. This topic was referred to in the report from which I have quoted where it says—

Traditionally, primary producers have used and managed their land in whatever manner they chose. Often long-term and off-site effects of their activities have been ignored or

overlooked. Society has to take account of the need to preserve options for the future, retain the versatility of its land resources, and to control transmitted effects of degradation.

It recognises that society is involved and that the Government as well as land users must make a contribution towards the restoration of our soil. It is imperative that the Government do so. The Bill allows the Government to make a contribution, but it does not commit the Government in any way. There should be a Government commitment to overcoming the problem. People throughout my electorate have approached me and expressed concern about this aspect. They say they would have greater faith in a Government contribution if it were a firm commitment and not an open-ended suggestion that it has the capacity to contribute.

I would like to mention a number of other points, but I will leave them to the Committee stage. However, I feel very strongly about the matter referred to by the member for Merredin—the right of appeal from a decision or order on soil conservation. Under the legislation, the commissioner can make a soil conservation order, and if the farmer concerned is unhappy about it he can appeal to the Minister who may seek advice from an advisory committee, but his decision is final.

I agree with the member for Merredin when he said that if the Minister insists on this approach, he should make his reasons known. I will go a little further. I believe this Parliament has a duty to protect citizens from any excesses of Government departments. This can be done by using the third arm of government; that is, the judiciary. The legislation should contain provision for the right of appeal to the courts.

Mr Evans: The provisions are immutable in law.

Mr STEPHENS: I am speaking advisedly, because prior to my entering Parliament I was the recipient of a little bureaucratic inefficiency. It concerned the APB which asked that I carry out certain works in a certain way. It persisted in that attitude notwithstanding the fact that responsible farmers in my area did not agree with it. I had no redress at law. The APB only had to put the matter in writing and the farmer had to do it. The fact that other farmers also did not agree with the APB's action was irrelevant. When I took the matter to court I was unable to call those farmers to justify my case. Although I was fined on a technicality, the Act contained no provision for me to make a case at law. However, it turned out that my view was correct because the problem

was resolved in the way I wanted it. I know from personal involvement the need for redress at law.

I indicate my support for the legislation; it is very worth while. I intend to raise certain aspects in Committee. The legislation would be better if it came under the Department of Conservation and Environment.

MR BLAIKIE (Vasse) [2.48 p.m.]: I regard this Bill as being the most important measure Parliament is considering. Its provisions cover the whole of Western Australia, and will involve every local government area in the State. Its impact will be widespread and will be felt by all people. I wonder how many members in this House and how many people generally realise the full ramifications of the measure.

The amendments proposed here have a number of intentions. One amendment will reduce the number of soil conservation advisory committees from 12 to 10. The Minister has given reasons to explain why this should be desirable, and I will comment on this later in my speech and during the Committee stage of the Bill. As the Minister said in his second reading speech, the major aim of the Bill is to put these committees under the control of the communities involved. That is a very laudable amendment.

Mr Cowan: That could be done under the principal Act.

MR BLAIKIE: This gives the communities a far greater involvement in matters of soil erosion.

Communities also would be given the right to strike a rate. That is a major improvement.

The Act is changed also by having district committees rather than regional committees. With that very important change smaller areas will be involved. These district committees will be able to recommend to the Minister that a soil conservation fund ought to be established. They will be able to set up machinery to have such a fund and, if they choose, to collect the moneys to be raised.

The legislation provides also that certain areas of a shire or a declared area can come under the proposals contained in this Bill.

Mr Cowan: District committees cannot collect rates.

MR BLAIKIE: No, but they can make recommendations that rates be collected. My reading of the Bill indicates that the district advisory committees will be the only bodies that can recommend that a rate be collected. I trust the Minister will answer later and indicate if that is so. I believe it is possible for the Minister to ask that the committees collect the rates, and that is

important. It gives the people an involvement in their destinies.

The principal Act—No. 15 of 1945—included widespread controls and powers. I ask: Why were these powers not used? I wonder whether the powers that will be available following the acceptance of this amending Bill will be used.

Section 31 deals with the soil conservation orders and reads—

31. The Commissioner may, with the approval of the Committee, make a soil conservation order relating to any tract of land which is subject to erosion or is liable or likely to become liable to erosion as a result of—

- (a) any agricultural or pastoral practices or methods, which have been or are likely to be adopted on that land, or on any other land;
- (b) the clearing or intended clearing of that land or of any other land; or
- (c) failure on the part of any person to take reasonable precautions to prevent or control soil erosion on that land or any other land;

but the Committee shall not approve the making of a soil conservation order until it is satisfied that the Commissioner has made, or by his officers has caused to be made, reasonable efforts to achieve the purpose of the proposed order, by negotiation with the owner or occupier of the land or both of them.

As one reads the various sections of the Act one sees they are very positive and definite.

Section 34(2) indicates that the decision of the Minister is final. Every opportunity is given to an individual to meet the conditions of the Act; if he does not it is made quite clear what measures can be taken against him. That is not to be changed.

Mr Evans: Are you advocating enforcement?

Mr BLAIKIE: Yes. The only way that soil conservation can be effective is if the legislation available is enforced. If these amendments are not enforced, they make the Act a toothless tiger.

Mr Cowan: They will be repealed.

Mr BLAIKIE: I believe there are adequate provisions in the existing Act which could effect a large amount of erosion control, but which are not enforced.

Mr Pearce: The Government has not been doing its job.

Mr Cowan: Don't you agree that the concept of taking away the need for a recommendation by a

committee, contained in this amendment, is quite a substantial change with the issuing of soil conservation orders, or notices as they will be? Previously a recommendation had to be made, but now the commission will be able to issue a notice without a recommendation.

Mr BLAIKIE: That is a substantial change. I hasten to add that a committee in a particular area in a rural community, for reasons best known to itself, may not issue an order.

The Bill proposes to change section 41 of the Act so that it will be possible for a series of notices to be issued. I will read a couple of sections from the Act for the benefit of members because it is important that the sections be recorded so that we understand what changes are being made.

Adequate power is contained in the present Act to effect real soil conservation in this State, if the Act were enforced. Again I ask: Why have the provisions of the existing Act not been applied?

Mr Pearce: You know the answer to that.

Mr BLAIKIE: The member for Gosnells' colleague might suggest why he did not apply them or why subsequent and previous Ministers for Agriculture did not do so. Section 41(1) reads—

41. (1) If the Minister is of opinion that for the purpose of soil conservation or erosion mitigation it is desirable that the trees upon any land should not be cut down or otherwise destroyed or injured he may serve a notice upon the owner of that land, and if the owner is not the occupier, upon the occupier also—

We return to destroying trees. It states the reasons that a person should not remove any trees at all and goes on to indicate what will happen to that person who does remove trees. The Minister has a discretion in this matter.

Mr Pearce: Don't look at us; look at the Minister!

Mr BLAIKIE: It indicates that the penalty will be \$500. Not only is there a penalty for an offence of removing trees, but if as a result of that offence damage is caused to another person, the offender is responsible to pay for the damage that was occasioned. The Act goes further than that again. It says in section 41 (7)—

The Minister may give notices and make orders under this section in relation to shrubs, plants or grasses or any class of any of them either in substitution for or in addition to trees, . . .

It goes on and on. The powers have been available under this Soil Conservation Act for many years.

My concern is that we have problems in Western Australia in regard to salinity, wind erosion, and soil degradation of various forms, in coastal areas, inland, or wherever they might be. The Act has plenty of teeth.

I ask the question again: Why has it not been acted upon? If we are changing only for the sake of change, are we simply going to change to another Act which is a more jazzed up version? History has shown that over the last 20 years nothing has happened.

We look to the establishment of these committees. If we look at page 6 of the proposal and compare it with section 9 of the Act, we find it relates to the soil conservation advisory committee. In the old Act the number on that committee was 12 and now it is proposed to be 10. I think the proposal to have 10 people is far preferable to the old situation. As members would appreciate, a committee consisting of three persons might be difficult to work, one of six might be more difficult; but 10 is far more preferable than 12. I acknowledge the change the Minister is proposing and accept the point. That is an important move.

Let us look at the changes in the sorts of people who are currently on that committee. It is noticeable that the Department of Lands and Surveys has not been given a position on the new body. A representative of the Public Works Department has not been given a position, either. The Department of Mines is not represented, nor is the Forests Department.

Let us review the bodies that will make up the new advisory committee. The Bill says, "one shall be a person who is an officer of the Public Service of the State and is employed in the Department of Agriculture." We see the Department of Agriculture has retained its status quo. As the Minister for Agriculture introduced this Bill, it is understandable why that happened. It continues by saying that the other three will be persons who are officers of the Public Service of the State or of the Commissioner of Main Roads. We see the Main Roads Department was represented in the old Act. There are two available places which have not been designated in the Bill. We then have the Country Shire Councils Association, the Primary Industry Association, the Pastoralists and Graziers Association, and, in addition, persons who are actively engaged in agricultural, horticultural, or pastoral pursuits.

I return to the point of Government representation. It is important for the Minister to give positive consideration to ensuring that at least an officer of the Public Works Department

is a member of this committee. The Public Works Department is deeply involved with hydrology and has great technical ability in this field and it should be involved in this area. I say that for a very good reason. If one considers the area that I represent—this Bill will certainly have a wide-ranging impact in that area—one realises that the Public Works Department has been the body in charge of beach erosion. It still has that responsibility. It has given excellent service and has provided sound advice in regard to these matters. That advice has been of the highest order.

With regard to soil conservation, beach erosion will be one of the principal problems. This Bill will cover that. If we talk of pollution by rivers or salinity encroachments, where better than the Public Works Department with its hydrological ability and technology to ask for advice on these matters?

I have great sympathy for the member for Stirling when he indicated the Department of Conservation and Environment ought to be on that body as it has special expertise in this State and was set up for the purpose we have in mind.

Mr Stephens interjected.

Mr BLAIE: This is an important Bill that will have wide-ranging application throughout all of Western Australia in relation to farmland. Members' contributions have centred almost exclusively on the operations of the Bill in relation to the farmland situation. I believe the Bill will go further than that and will take care of the other areas I have mentioned. It has the ability to effect very positive soil conservation measures.

I am concerned that those provisions within the Act have not been utilised already and I am hopeful that the new Act when promulgated will be enforced. I trust the Minister, in his reply, will answer some of the remarks I have made and it is my intention to pursue some of those matters further while in the Committee stage.

MR CRANE (Moore) [3.11 p.m.]: I have been approached by some of the shires in my electorate which have expressed concern regarding certain areas of this Bill. I am quite enthusiastic that such legislation has come before the Parliament. It is possibly 30 years later than it should have been.

As one who has been associated with agricultural affairs for many years I can speak with some authority and some knowledge of the problems that have developed and have accelerated in the last 10 to 15 years. Degradation of our soil is something which should be of concern to all Western Australians because while

we talk about, "our farm" I do not think any of us own any land permanently; we are only the custodians while we are here. It should be our responsibility that the land is passed on in better order than it was when we became the custodians. I take this attitude in relation to my own property and I have been there since 1926.

I said that this legislation has been presented later than it ought to have been, but it is never too late to do something to improve a situation. Therefore, I welcome the Bill before us. I support the general concept that it is necessary and I hope that while, at the present time, it may not be in the form it will eventually take, it will be a start to putting matters right—matters which have gone astray for a number of years. As has been mentioned by the member for Vasse the membership of the advisory committee has been reduced from 12 to 10. This committee will comprise five representatives from rural land users, four Government department representatives, and the Commissioner of Soil Conservation. I agree it is important to cut down the membership by two, but I am a firm believer that the best committees are those which have a membership of three—with two away sick, something can be achieved! Although a committee of 10 is rather unwieldy I consider it will be better able now to do the task it has to undertake.

I share the views of the member for Vasse when he expressed concern that the Public Works Department had not been given a berth on this committee. I hope the Minister has taken note of his comments. The member for Stirling suggested that consideration should be given to involvement from the Department of Conservation and the Environment. I agree with this also, because it should have some input to the committee. The PWD probably has had far more experience with the handling of water than have other Government departments, including the Department of Agriculture.

A great deal of soil erosion occurs along the coastline, as illustrated by the sand dunes and beach erosion. I have been involved in these matters in parts of my electorate and I know that the PWD could play a part in this regard.

The implementation of soil conservation districts is very important. The State should be divided into districts in order that local community involvement might be achieved to carry out the work which, in many instances, should have been done, many years ago. It has been mentioned already that many Government departments had the power to assist in this matter, but unfortunately did not do so.

While I have a great deal of respect for many officers of the departments I consider there is no knowledge as valuable as local knowledge and the fact that district committees will be set up under this legislation will be of paramount importance. The advisory committees will be the spearhead of the attack on the soil degradation problem which has faced us for many years and which is increasing. As a result of community involvement and their financial interest, the money will be spent wisely and for every dollar spent, a dollar's worth of work will be done.

I refer to the conservation rate. I understood that this was to be on the advice of the advisory committees, but now it appears that there could be other inputs or leads with regard to the establishment of this rate. I reserve my decision on this until I see how it is intended it will happen. I recognise there may be other areas where shire councils can make a great contribution because local government is the government closest to the people and in many cases is very closely involved in the problems which we are discussing.

The district advisory committees which will set this rate will include people who have experienced problems in soil degradation and they will be in the best position to strike a rate and give a direction as to how the funds should be expended.

Over the years many arguments have taken place regarding the different methods that could be used to combat soil erosion. Some people have been successful in propagating the use of levy or contour banks. In the area north of Watheroo deep drains are proving successful, but no individual method is the panacea for all of our problems. The success of such methods depends upon the terrain where the scheme is employed.

We also must consider the problems such schemes may cause to one's neighbours. For example, once deep drains are installed, what happens to the water when it has drained from the property where it has been causing most of the problem? I am not suggesting for a moment that the farmers employing such methods are irresponsible; far from it. However, the fact remains that the water must go somewhere. The Public Works Department—perhaps in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture—possibly would be the best authority to prepare an overall plan for a district. The plan may cover an area of 30 or 50 square miles, and would mean that when we implemented a scheme in one area, we would know problems may develop somewhere else, and we could take action accordingly.

This legislation is very necessary because there are different categories of farmers, and it is in the farming industry, unfortunately, where most of the troubles have occurred. Some farmers are in the industry not only to obtain a living, but also because they love the land, and take pride and joy in developing their properties from what was once virgin bush. Other farmers are in the industry for different reasons. They are not necessarily all professional men looking for a tax advantage or a way of offsetting exorbitant income tax rates and inflation which is eroding their incomes. Indeed, some professional people make very good farmers. In some districts, their properties are the showplace of the area. Many of these farmers rightfully belong to the first category of those who love the land.

Then there are others who are better described as "miners" than farmers. They mine the soil; they take all the soil can give, and put nothing back. Unfortunately, such farmers are to be found all over the State. It is particularly at these people that legislation such as this is aimed; it will bring them under control and ensure the methods they employ are not to the disadvantage of their neighbours. After all, we do not really own the land; we are simply its custodians while we are here.

I hope this legislation will do a great deal to ensure that Western Australian agricultural land will remain productive for generations to come. We must feed an expanding world, and I believe the only way the world can be fed is through agricultural pursuits. Perhaps one day technology will find a way of turning other commodities into food; however, I think that day is a long way off.

I wholeheartedly support the legislation. Of course, as is usually the case with new legislation, anomalies will become evident, and the Act may need to be amended and improved. As I have said before, nobody really knew whether the Boeing 747 would fly successfully until somebody climbed into the cockpit and flew it.

Mr Pearce: That is absolute rubbish! They knew it would fly. It was tested in wind tunnels, and the like. They do not build planes like that any more.

Mr CRANE: I would not expect anything but the raucous remarks of the member for Gosnells; he knows nothing of this subject.

Mr Davies: They do not build an aircraft and then hope it will fly.

Mr CRANE: As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted, we will improve this legislation as the need arises.

I have been approached by some shire councillors expressing their concern not so much with the fact a levy was to be introduced, but rather at the possibility they might be required to collect the levy. They pointed out they were not tax collectors, and would rather the levy was collected by some other means. I raised this matter with the Minister and he very quickly indicated that would not be the case; if the shires do not wish to take an active part in collecting the levy, they need not do so. However, I am sure that once the shires become familiar with this legislation, they will wish to become involved, and in many instances they may want to collect the levy.

Many years ago, we used to have a flooding problem in Moora. This problem has not been evident in recent years because we have not had very much rain. The Public Works Department was of great assistance to the Moora Shire Council, which is why I believe the department should be closely concerned with the operation of this legislation. We desaggged the Moore River to make it flow more freely and, to a great extent, that solved the problem of local flooding. That was a classic example where legislation similar to this, and a similar fund, could have been used to advantage. The Moora Shire Council—because of the size of the town—could have contributed to the fund and, no doubt, the Government also would have wished to help. In addition, many of the farmers whose properties shed a great deal of the water probably would have assisted by the construction of contour banks to contain the water. It was a perfect example of the need for such legislation.

One of the advisers to the Department of Agriculture in Moora, Mr Lenane, some eight years ago prepared a plan relating to my area at Bindi Bindi along the lines envisaged by this legislation. His proposal already has been initiated by astute officers and landowners of the area. In fact, it involves part of my property; the department has conducted a number of trials on my property. Very good stands of shrubs are growing on the property, and I have fenced off the area for the purpose of the tests.

This is an example of how farmers, local authorities, and Government departments can co-operate to make legislation work.

In conclusion, I emphasise the importance of the involvement of the Public Works Department in this scheme. With those remarks, I strongly support the legislation.

MR SIBSON (Bunbury) [3.29 p.m.]: I support the legislation and, like other members, herald it

as one of the more important pieces of legislation presented to this House this session, if not for many years.

Mr Pearce: It is the most supported piece of legislation ever to come before the House.

Mr SIBSON: The member for Gosnells does not know what he is talking about; he does not understand the importance of this legislation, nor is he very interested in it.

Mr Pearce: It simply does not seem necessary to have a two-day debate on legislation on which everybody agrees.

Mr SIBSON: The fact that everybody agrees with this legislation does not make it any less significant.

Mr Old: It makes it good legislation.

Mr Pearce: It simply means we do not need such a long debate.

Mr SIBSON: I will recap on some of the situations over the years in relation to soil conservation in this State. It is not very long since we celebrated the 150th anniversary of Western Australia; and if we reflect on the time when our pioneers started to farm the land, we know they had many problems. The member for Moore has mentioned one or two of the types of people with different attitudes to the land. They include the people who are dedicated to the land, and my father was one of those. He came from Cumbria in the north of England, and came to Australia as a farmer, to till the land to its best.

When we talk about problems in relation to land clearing and water catchment areas, and in relation to the seeding and growing of various crops, we should remember that other countries—Mr Acting Speaker, I ask for a little bit of quiet at the back of the Chair.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Tubby): I can hear you quite clearly. However, I ask members to be quiet.

Mr SIBSON: The history of land development throughout the world is that many people do not know what it is all about. If we consider the areas in the north of England, with which I am somewhat familiar, we realise in the early days various steps were taken in order that crops could be grown and cattle could be grazed. One of the problems was the drainage of the land. When the heavy timber was cleared from the land, it was found that it was not possible to grow grasses or crops, or to graze the land, because of the excess water that remained. A system of drainage was put in train, and fairly deep drains were dug—up to five or six feet deep—and a series of pipes drained the water away from the land. That was

done in order that grasses and crops could be grown, and grazing could be carried out. I am saying this simply to explain that we are not the only place having problems. They are experienced all over the world.

To return to the comments made by the member for Moore about the people involved on the land, a great majority of farmers are dedicated people who know what they are doing when they are farming; and they want to make the land available for their children and grandchildren, and the generations to follow. They look after the land.

Of course, some farmers were aptly described by the member for Moore as "the miners of the land". They do not take minerals out of the ground, but they do use the land to the extent that they take everything they can from it, and put nothing back. That type of activity includes the clearing of areas that should not be cleared, and overcropping, over-stocking, under-fertilising, and not tilling the land. That is one of the reasons that the previous legislation was passed; and certainly it is a good reason for the amending legislation before us which, I believe, will go a long way if it is enforced.

The member for Vasse made comments about enforcement. Many politicians and Government departments shy off enforcement; but if we take into consideration the land clearing bans in the Collie catchment and other catchments in this State, and the problems the Government has had, we realise we have learnt from experience that it is important to police these Acts. We should ensure that the enforcement of this Act is carried out to the fullest. It is not fair on current generations if people are allowed to abuse the land. Certainly it is totally unfair and unacceptable for future generations. For those reasons, the enforcement of the law is absolutely essential.

I would like to make a few comments about my early days in farming.

Mr Tonkin: Is this really necessary?

Mr SIBSON: I remember some of the things that happened. The member for Warren comes from a very heavily timbered part of this State—one of the most heavily timbered parts of Western Australia—

Mr Brian Burke: And of Australia.

Mr SIBSON: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for prompting me on that point. The land in the area of the member for Warren was very heavily timbered, as was the south-west coast from Bunbury to Augusta. Nevertheless, those timbered areas have been cleared for farming. An

initial problem was the regrowth which began almost immediately. However, other problems occurred, especially in the early days with the attempt to grow pastures by the introduction of certain grasses. It was not realised at the time that the soil was desperately short of trace elements. After some years, when the condition of cattle had deteriorated, and some of them had died of certain diseases—particularly black leg and red water, and many other diseases—it was found, with the co-operation of the Department of Agriculture, that the use of superphosphate and trace elements, together with the introduction of subterranean clovers, was able to overcome the problem. In fact, in some areas of the south-west, farmers walked off the land before the problem was solved.

Many people blamed the economy for the failure of farmers. Certainly in those years the economy played a very great part in their life; but the major reason people walked away from the farms was that the soil, after it had been cleared and, in some places, deep ploughed, had been affected detrimentally. Deep ploughing, in particular, brought all the sour soil from underneath and placed it on top, burying the topsoil which, in those days, was minimal but essential as far as the growing of grasses and crops was concerned. The end result was that the grasses would not grow.

As I mentioned before, with the introduction of subterranean clovers, superphosphate, and trace elements, the pastures began to develop in the south-west. I am speaking specifically about the south-west, because that is where I have had experience. If members drive through the south-west, they will find that the pastures are equal to any that they would find here, in the Eastern States, and in other countries. That development has been brought about because, over the years since the days of very early settlement, the farmers, the Department of Agriculture, the Public Works Department, and other agencies have been involved in experimentation, research, investigation, and development to enable these things to happen.

Another mistake made in the early days was that of overdrainage. A scheme known as the "sustenance" scheme was set up in Western Australia to create employment for people who were unemployed at the time. A lot of unemployment was experienced in those days.

Unfortunately some of the projects embarked upon were quite disastrous. One such project involved the drainage of land, particularly in the south-west. Drains were dug to remove the surplus water in the winter, but the end result was

that the land dried out very quickly as soon as the rain stopped. Another unsuccessful scheme, which is not relevant to this debate, was the construction of miles of fences which were inevitably burnt down by bushfires.

In his second reading speech, the Minister indicated that the aims of the Bill include the placing of a greater obligation for soil conservation on the community. That aspect of the Minister's comments pleased me, because one cannot introduce legislation and expect that, because it has been introduced, proclaimed, and handed to the responsible Minister and his department to implement, it will necessarily succeed. The legislation relating to clearing bans is a classic example of that. When it was introduced, a great deal of criticism was levelled at it and much discussion took place. Some of the criticism was justified, but most of it was not. In the final analysis, as a result of the involvement of the total community—by that I mean farmers, local government people, the community generally including solicitors, accountants, stock agents, bankers, and all those who are vitally concerned and involved in activities in agricultural areas—the provisions have worked very successfully. However, that occurred only because the Government was determined to involve all areas of the community in achieving successful land clearing legislation. The same situation applies in respect of this Bill.

The legislation should be successful provided all members of the community who are concerned with this matter accept the fact that they have a responsibility and a part to play in regard to it. It will be necessary also for the position to be monitored continually and for the legislation to be updated from time to time.

During the course of debate today, one member said that on occasions the legislation would need to be brought back here in order that changes, additions, and deletions could be made to it. It is important that all members accept that such changes will be necessary during the course of the implementation of the legislation. It is important that legislation of this nature be re-assessed from time to time and returned to the Parliament for further debate to take place not only within the House, but also within the community at large. I stress the fact that community involvement is vital to the effective operation of the legislation. Whenever problems become apparent in the implementation of the provisions, it is essential they be dealt with immediately.

I shall refer now to a soil conservation matter in my own electorate. When I said that, the member for Victoria Park looked at me—

Mr Davies: I do not have too many farms in my electorate.

Mr SIBSON: —as if to say, “How many farms do you have in your electorate?”

Mr Pearce: I have more farms in my electorate than you have in yours.

Mr SIBSON: That is right.

Mr Pearce: You should leave it to somebody like me who knows about farming to speak about it!

Mr SIBSON: The coastal strip is extremely important not only today but also for the future, and I am disappointed inadequate emphasis is being placed on soil conservation there. Frequent references are made to the degradation of plant life in the coastal strip and the way in which community activities result in a deteriorating environment by disturbing the native flora and fauna. However, very little attention is given to soil conservation along the coastal strip.

The Maidens is a well known area just south of the central City of Bunbury and the environment there has suffered as a result of the use of motorcycles and off-road vehicles. The Bunbury City Council has taken measures to restrict the use of these vehicles to some extent in the area, although I do not believe enough has been done in that direction, and no action has been taken to encourage soil conservation.

The problems created by the infiltration of people using various modes of transport would be greatly overcome if action were taken in the area to build up the topsoil and encourage the continued growth of the native scrub, bushes, and small trees, along with the introduction of new species. The soil there is very light and sandy and there is only a very thin layer of topsoil. Members would be aware that topsoil is essential for plant growth. Therefore, I maintain soil conservation in that area should be considered in the light of this legislation.

In his second reading speech the Minister said—

In 1981, our agricultural production was worth more than \$1.5 billion.

It is important to remember that, despite the problems experienced with soil conservation and erosion, we were able to achieve that level of agricultural production. However, much remains to be done in this area not only by the rural industries, but also with the assistance of forestry and mining.

In conclusion, I point out we must not regard soil conservation as something we have discovered only recently, because in the 150 years of the

history of this State it has been proved soil conservation has a vital part to play in our development. I pay credit to the people who have achieved success already in that field and mention particularly the PWD which plays an important role. I support the appeals by the members for Vasse and Moore that the PWD be given greater emphasis in this legislation and, at the same time, I appeal to the PWD to accept the fact that it should encourage total community involvement in this matter.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Nanovich.

BILLS (3): RETURNED

1. Parliamentary Commissioner Amendment Bill.
2. Acts Amendment (Country Water and Sewerage) Bill.
3. Stamp Amendment Bill (No. 2).

Bills returned from the Council without amendment.

HEALTH AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 22 April.

MR DAVIES (Victoria Park) [3.52 p.m.]: This small Bill contains 15 amendments, all of which except one are minor. It is tidying up legislation. One wonders why before now we have not written into the legislation that a Deputy Commissioner of Health can act in the absence of the commissioner rather than our having to go through the procedure of proclaiming in the *Government Gazette* that the deputy commissioner will for a period take over the duties of the commissioner. The Commissioner of Public Health is a person with tremendous power. As soon as anything goes wrong with anything associated with health we generally want the commissioner or the Public Health Department to take appropriate action immediately. If the commissioner is away it is not always possible for his deputy to take appropriate action.

We have been fortunate in our selections of commissioners of health. Dr W. Davidson did a tremendous amount of good work for this State in raising the standards of general health care. He is a man who served the State well. Dr McNulty, the present occupant of the position, is also a very dedicated and capable person. We were lucky to have Dr Davidson, and we are lucky to have Dr McNulty—people of the right calibre for that kind of job because it requires a balanced and broad view of the various matters that come before the Public Health Department for judgment and decision. Judgments often must be

made instantaneously, so we need well-versed and qualified people to make appropriate decisions.

A further amendment relates to a change of name of the State Branch of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists to "the Australian College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (W.A. Branch)".

Mr Young: It is pretty fascinating stuff.

Mr DAVIES: I thought it was a pretty important amendment! It is like the time we spent changing the name of the Art Gallery of WA to the Western Australian Art Gallery, or whatever. These changes are necessary so that the law can be applied properly, and we do not object to that course.

I will not comment on the other provisions of the legislation except one. The Minister explained them briefly in his second reading speech. The amendment to which I wish to make full reference is that which relates to the co-opting of persons conversant with trade requirements as members of the pesticides advisory committee. The Government has not put any argument in any form, neither by way of the Minister's second reading speech nor by way of answers to questions asked by the member for Melville, to justify this amendment, and it has not in any way provided the history of why this matter should now be brought forward and has been determined necessary or satisfactory.

In this case the composition of the committee will be members of the trade co-opted to provide advice on particular trade practices. Such people do not have to be co-opted to give advice because the committee is not restrained in its attempts to seek information on any matter that comes before it. Why should we need to co-opt people to advise the committee, treat them as full members of the committee, no doubt pay them a fee similar to that which is paid to other members of the committee, and allow those co-opted members to vote on matters before the committee? Why must we do those things? The answer is beyond me.

Even if I were to go along with the idea that people conversant with the trade should be co-opted to advise the committee and sit as members of the committee, I cannot go along with the proposition that those co-opted people have the right to make a deliberative vote on matters on which they are present to give advice, or any other matter at that time before the committee. Such a practice is not adopted anywhere else of which I am aware. Indeed, the position is to the contrary.

If a member of Parliament has a vested interest in any matter affecting the public and that matter is being discussed by the Parliament, he must

declare his interest. I remember the Premier at one time trying to stop the member for Welshpool and me from voting on a particular matter. We were trustees of the Perth Trades Hall (Inc.) and he said we had a vested interest in the subject before the Parliament and should not be able to vote on that matter which related to office accommodation. Of course, his point was ruled out of order, although for reasons different from those which might be raised when objection is put forward to a member voting on a particular local government matter. So long as a member declares his interest he may be able to vote on a matter, but in connection with the pesticides advisory committee people conversant with and representing the trade are given the ability to register a vote on a matter before the committee which they were co-opted to advise on. The matter before the committee may be related to a particular interest of a person from the trade, or it may be any other subject.

We just cannot go along with this amendment. Unless the Minister is able to convince us that good reason is available for this amendment, we will vote against the clause which seems quite unnecessary; no proper justification has been advanced for it. It may be that enough people are co-opted to the committee so that those people have the balance of power in voting on a matter before the committee, and that would upset the balance of voting set down by the Parliament. Such a practice is neither ethical nor moral.

I ask the Minister to tell us in his reply why the Government has seen fit to commence this practice of giving co-opted members of a committee the power to vote when they are co-opted for the purpose of advising the committee. I know of no other Government committee that adopts this practice, or of the practice being followed either within or without the Parliament. The practice is new and one which I believe does not adhere to the general concept of committee dealings. Certainly we hope the Minister will decide not to continue with the clause.

MR YOUNG (Scarborough—Minister for Health) [3.58 p.m.]: I think the member for Victoria Park will be a little surprised by what I will suggest. Instead of his suggesting to me that I do not proceed with the amendment relating to co-opted members of a committee, I suggest he have a quick whip around his colleagues to ask them whether they are prepared to consider changing their minds.

Mr Davies: Give us a good reason and we might agree.

Mr YOUNG: At the time the member for Victoria Park was the Minister for Health, this practice was followed, and in fact it was removed by a Liberal Government in 1976, although I am not aware of the reason for that provision being deleted.

Mr Davies: I didn't think the provision was just at the time.

Mr YOUNG: For the time the member for Victoria Park was the Minister for Health that provision existed.

Mr Davies: I did not think it was just when I was Minister.

Mr YOUNG: I have the distinct impression that the member recorded in *Hansard* that such a provision had never existed, and that this amendment represents a completely new principle—the provision probably did not exist anywhere. Possibly the member just forgot.

Mr Davies: You are probably right. We didn't think it was just.

Mr YOUNG: In a committee such as the poisons advisory committee, or the one to which reference has been made, quite often the members are drawn from groups of academic or scientific people, and it is necessary to bring in people conversant with the trade in question to advise the committee on practical aspects such as the performance of particular poisons or insecticides used in the field. It was always accepted that trade representatives would be allowed to be members of the committee, to have full voting rights, but to have those voting rights only in respect of the matter for which they were co-opted to the committee.

The point the member for Victoria Park makes in respect of the situation under which he feels a trade representative or a group of trade representatives could overbalance the committee would not really eventuate because the position would be that a trade representative called in as a member of that committee for the time being in respect of the matter under discussion would be the person who could vote as trade representative on that question. Therefore, there would not be any other trade representatives at that time who might then be co-opted to that committee for some other purpose who would be voting with that person and therefore creating a situation which the member for Victoria Park described as one in which the committee could be outvoted by these trade representatives.

It is clear that the Opposition accepts the major thrust of the Bill. As the member for Victoria Park pointed out, most of the amendments are of a fairly inconsequential nature and simply tidy up

the Act. The points made by the member for Victoria Park together with the one I made in respect of the fact that this situation existed prior to 1976, are indicative of the fact that the things the member claims might happen by virtue of reintroducing it are not really of consequence because they did not happen before and it is not likely they will happen now. It is not unreasonable to reintroduce this concept into the Act to give trade representatives who are co-opted the power to vote so their votes can be more strongly heard in respect of committees.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee

The Deputy Chairman of Committees (Mr Trethowan) in the Chair; Mr Young (Minister for Health) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 7 put and passed.

Progress

Progress reported and leave given to sit again, on motion by Mr Young (Minister for Health).

URANIUM (YEELIRRIE) AGREEMENT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

MR P. V. JONES (Narrogin—Minister for Resources Development) [4.05 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the Bill is to obtain ratification by Parliament of a further agreement between the State and the joint venturers in the Yeelirrie uranium project.

The agreement was completed on Tuesday, 4 May 1982 and varies the provisions of the uranium (Yeelirrie) agreement of 1978 as amended by the variation of 1981 which was tabled on 1 December, 1981. The 1981 variation agreement became operative from and including 30 March 1982, having passed through the 12 sitting days' tabling process in both Houses of Parliament with no notice of motion for its disallowance being received by either House. From this point on, the 1978 agreement as varied by the 1981 agreement will be referred to as the principal agreement.

The companies now comprising the joint venturer parties to the principal agreement—in which they are referred to as "the corporation"—are—

Yeelirrie Development Company Pty. Ltd.;

Esso Exploration and Production Australia Inc.; and Orangesellschaft Australia Pty. Limited.

raising of project capital by preselling of Yeelirrie product.

The 1982 agreement was entered into because of the urgent need to vary the provisions of the principal agreement on two counts as follows—

(1) To ensure that the joint venturers can—subject to approval of proposals—obtain a mining lease under the Mining Act 1978, in lieu of the mineral leases under the Mining Act 1904 now provided for in the principal agreement—*vide* principal agreement clause 21.

(2) To widen the range of transactions—and documents evidencing same—which the State may at its discretion exempt from not more than 75 per cent of the stamp duty otherwise payable—*vide* clause 45(2) of the principal agreement.

As to the first count, members of the House will observe that the majority of the clauses in the 1982 agreement deal with the several amendments of the principal agreement necessary to enable it to remain fully workable and effective in conjunction with the provisions of the Mining Act 1978.

Provision is made for exemption from expenditure conditions applying to the mining lease under the Mining Act 1978 in lieu of exemption from labour conditions under the Mining Act 1904 mineral lease.

The provisions of the principal agreement—Clause 21(1)—whereby the Minister for Mines was given the authority to apply conditions to the granting of a mineral lease under the Mining Act 1904 have been deleted. Such provisions are no longer necessary, as the Mining Act 1978 authorises the Minister for Mines to apply appropriate conditions to the issue of a mining lease.

I turn now to the second count—dealing with stamp duty—and refer Members to pages 4524 and 4525 of book 4 of volume 221 of *Hansard's* report of debate in this House on 2 November 1978. That debate was on the second reading speech by the then Minister for Industrial Development on the introduction of the Uranium (Yeelirrie) Agreement Bill 1978.

In that speech, specific reference was made to the State's intention to exempt at its discretion not more than 75 per cent of the stamp duty otherwise payable on certain documents associated with the special financial arrangements for the project. The special arrangements referred to were explained by the Minister to relate to the

I am advised that at the relevant time it was the understanding of all the parties to the principal agreement that the provisions of clause 45 (2) of the agreement would cover the range of documents likely to be associated with project funding of the nature described.

In late 1980 the joint venturers confirmed their need to raise at least part of the project funds by direct loans from banks and other lending institutions, and sought the widening of the scope of the discretionary stamp duty exemption provisions of the principal agreement to embrace the transactions and associated documents involved in that form of project fund raising. The extension of the scope of principal agreement clause 45 (2) for the purpose sought by the joint venturers would serve to recognise the altered funding arrangements for the project without increasing the value of the stamp duty concession originally intended to be granted by the State. An appropriate provision is therefore contained in the 1982 agreement immediately preceding the subclause dealing with the substitution of the second schedule to the principal agreement.

I am advised that negotiations for the sale of yellowcake are at a crucial stage and that the completion of present negotiations depends on the joint venturers being in a position to give warranties that the existing Yeelirrie mineral claims referred to in the principal agreement, can be converted to a mining lease under the Mining Act 1978 and until such conversions they will remain as mineral claims under the provisions of the Mining Act 1904 and the principal agreement.

These warranties will ensure that marketing negotiations can be finalised and the Yeelirrie project brought to fulfilment.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Bateman.

QUESTIONS

Questions were taken at this stage.

House adjourned at 4.36 p.m.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

775 and 776. *These questions were again postponed.*

HEALTH: RADIATION

Capel: Levels

780. Mr HODGE, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Is he aware that the National Health and Medical Research Council recommends that when a member of the public is exposed to radiation for a long period of time, the annual average doses should not exceed 100 millirem—or 12 microrem per hour—above the natural background?
- (2) Is he concerned that many long-term residents of Capel may have received annual average doses considerably in excess of this figure as a result of mineral sands tailings under their houses, schools and workplaces?
- (3) What action is proposed to remedy this situation?
- (4) Is he aware that many vacant lots and street verges in Capel have high radiation levels due to mineral sands tailings?
- (5) Will he ensure that these tailings are removed before building commences on these lots?
- (6) Can he indicate the nature of the commercial premises in Capel in which elevated radiation levels have been found?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) No. The National Health and Medical Research Council does not make a recommendation in these terms. It makes the statement that:

"In any case where the doses to the same individuals could approach this limit over many years, it will be prudent to take measures to restrict their life time doses—equivalent to a value corresponding to an average annual effective dose—equivalent of 1 mSv". (1 mSv = 100 millirem).

The action taken by the Radiological Council is expected to restrict life time doses as suggested.

- (2) I would always be concerned if many members of the public were exposed to annual radiation doses which might exceed 100 millirems averaged over their life time. In fact, with the remedial action being taken, very few, if any people in Capel will exceed this figure. None will exceed the figure of 500 millirem per year which is recommended by the National Health and Medical Research Council for groups within the population.

No one, least of all children, will receive a significant contribution to their life time dose from mineral sands tailings at the school.

- (3) This was stated in answer to part (5) of question 37.
- (4) Yes.
- (5) Yes. This is one of the reasons why full information has been given to the Capel Shire.
- (6) Only in the service station has the Radiological Council's guideline for the hourly exposure rate been exceeded. However, because of the limited occupancy, the guideline for the annual radiation exposure is not exceeded. Further studies of this location are being carried out.

Radiation protection is a very difficult and complex subject and I can appreciate that the member has some difficulty in understanding it. At the same time he has repeatedly misquoted or misinterpreted the literature. I do not know who, if anybody, is advising the member, but I would suggest that he should tell him to be at pains to see that the radiation protection standards and codes are properly interpreted.

MINING: MINERAL SANDS

Industry: Radiation Doses

781. Mr HODGE, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Is he aware that many workers in the mineral sands industry receive annual radiation doses in excess of the maximum permissible level for the general public; i.e., 0.5 rem per annum?
- (2) Is he aware that exposure to ionising radiation can produce an increased incidence of naturally occurring diseases such as cancer, leukaemia, cataracts, and genetic disease?
- (3) In view of the difficulty which radiation workers would have in proving that such diseases were produced by occupational exposure to ionising radiation, should not the Government amend the Workers' Compensation Act to give radiation workers access to workers' compensation for diseases known to be related to radiation exposure?

- (4) As radiation workers are asked to carry additional health risks because of the nature of their work, has not the Government a moral responsibility to assist them if they contract a radiation-induced illness during or after their period of employment as radiation workers?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) I am aware that some workers in the mineral sands industry receive annual radiation doses in excess of the maximum permissible levels for the general public. Information on radiation doses to workers was given in answer to part (12) of question 37.
- (2) Yes. Reference should also be made to the answer given to part (5) of question 467.
- (3) This question should be addressed to the Minister administering the Workers' Compensation Act. However, even a superficial examination of the Act would show that the third schedule provides for any workers exposed to radiation.
- (4) I refer the member to the answer given to part (29) (c) of question 467. I also refer him to the following quotation from publication 26 of the international commission on radiological protection.

"As stated in paragraph 77, the Commission's recommended dose-equivalent limits for occupational exposure have been in effect for over 20 years. In view of the emphasis that the Commission places on risk estimations, it believes it appropriate to assess the levels of risk that are associated with its dose-equivalent limits. The Commission believes that for the foreseeable future a valid method for judging the acceptability of the level of risk in radiation work is by comparing this risk with that for other occupations recognised as having high standards of safety, which are generally considered to be those in which the average mortality due to occupational hazards does not exceed 10^{-4} . In most occupations, fatalities, whether due to accident or disease, are accompanied by a much larger number of less severe consequences. Radiation exposure, on the other hand, at levels imposed by adherence to recommended dose-equivalent limits is expected to cause very few injuries or illnesses in exposed

workers other than any malignant diseases which may be induced. In assessing the implication of dose-equivalent limits therefore, the Commission believes that the calculated rate at which fatal malignancies might be induced by occupational exposure to radiation should in any case not exceed the occupational fatality rate of industries recognised as having high standards of safety".

Workers in the mineral sands industry receive doses significantly less than the dose limits recommended by the International Commission. It is, therefore, not accepted that these workers are asked to carry additional health risks.

782. *This question was postponed.*

HOUSING

Evictions

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

- (1) How many eviction orders have been served by the State Housing Commission on—
- (a) Aboriginal tenants;
- (b) European tenants;
- in the past two years?
- (2) How many families in each case were evicted?

Mr SHALDERS replied:

(1) ARREARS ACTIONS—RENTAL PROPERTIES

		Year 1980/81 1/7/81 31/3/82	
Notices to Quit Served:	A.G.H.	695	636
	C.S.R.H.	420	239
Aborigines		1 115	875
Others		1 913	1 537
TOTAL		3 028	2 412
Court Orders Obtained/Writs of Summons Served:	A.G.H.	83	80
	C/S	69	38
Aborigines		152	118
Others		110	85
TOTAL		262	203
(2) Evictions			
	A.G.H.	14	16
	C/S	9	4
Aborigines		23	20
Others		11	10
TOTAL		34	30

HOSPITALS: COUNTRY

Accommodation: Assistance

784. Mr WILSON, to the Premier:

- (1) When the Government decided to increase rental for its employees in country areas by \$18 per week in three increments with the total increase taking effect on 1 January 1983, what consideration was given to the possible effect of such increases in deterring quality staff from transferring to smaller country hospitals?
- (2) In view of the major problems involved in recruiting staff in many wheat belt hospitals and the necessity to offer sufficient inducements such as subsidised housing to aid such recruitment, will he consider reviewing the decision on rental increases as an aid to maintaining suitable staff levels in the management of country hospitals?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

- (1) The increases were made to bring rentals of hospital houses into line with those charged by the Government Employees' Housing Authority as it was unreasonable for one group of employees to be charged more than another.
- (2) No. There is no evidence that the increased rental is having a detrimental effect on recruitment. In the majority of wheatbelt towns, hospital houses are only provided for rent by managing secretaries and matrons. It is considered that the level of salary received by these employees ensures that no financial hardship would result from the increased rentals.

HOUSING

State Energy Commission

785. Mr WILSON, to the Minister for Fuel and Energy:

- (1) Can he confirm that as part of the decision to increase housing rental rates for State Energy Commission employees in country areas to achieve parity with the Government Employees' Housing Authority rate, commission employees are being required to terminate their existing tenancies and to execute a new tenancy agreement?

(2) If "Yes", does this new agreement require commission employees to agree that the commission shall have the absolute right to deduct the rental, increased rental or other moneys to the commission from the employee's wage or salary?

(3) If "Yes" to (2), what further consideration is the commission or the Government prepared to give to the apparently excessive power given to the commission to set whatever rental it chooses and to automatically deduct that amount from tenants' wages or salaries?

Mr P. V. JONES replied:

(1) Yes. The intention of the proposed changes is to move towards uniformity in housing standards and rentals for Government employees to minimise the very considerable disparity between employees of various Government departments, which has been a longstanding cause of discontent.

In the case of the State Energy Commission, some of the previous rentals are as low as \$4.20, or as much as \$32 per week lower than comparable Government Employees' Housing Authority houses in the same area.

Government Employees' Housing Authority rentals are, in themselves, in many areas considerably lower than rentals in the general market.

(2) The new State Energy Commission agreement has been drawn up to cover the same items as, and are very similar to, the tenancy agreements now in use by the Government Employees' Housing Authority and the State Housing Commission, and obviously cannot be otherwise if uniformity in housing conditions is to be achieved.

I am advised that the proposed new agreement does not give the commission the right to deduct the increased rental or other moneys to the commission from the employees' wage or salary until the tenant or other employee authorises the deduction by signing the appropriate procurement order.

- (3) It is not the intention that the State Energy Commission can set whatever rental it chooses, but only on the basis of rentals for housing comparable to that provided by the Government Employees' Housing Authority. It must be borne in mind that some accommodation may require substantial upgrading to Government Employees' Housing Authority standards before full rentals can be charged.

It must also be acknowledged that the provision of subsidised housing to employees of the State Energy Commission is provided at a greatly increasing cost to the customers of the SEC, and as with all other subsidies and costs, is reflected in the energy tariffs. It is still the intention to ensure subsidised housing continues to be provided for State Energy Commission employees at an appropriate and acceptable financial cost.

HOUSING: GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES' HOUSING AUTHORITY

Stock and Expenditure

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

- (1) What is the total housing stock of the Government Employees' Housing Authority?
- (2) How many new units of accommodation were constructed for the authority in each of the past five years?
- (3) What was the amount expended in each of the past five years on—
 - (a) new housing;
 - (b) maintenance of existing housing;
 - (c) acquisition of land?

Mr SHALDERS replied:

- (1) The number of rental stock of Government Employees' Housing Authority as at 30 April 1982 is 2,811.
- (2) and (3) The member's attention is drawn to the respective Government Employees' Housing Authority annual reports.

HOUSING: GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES' HOUSING AUTHORITY

Rentals: Standardised

787. Mr WILSON, to the Premier:

- (1) When the Government decided to standardise rentals for employees

occupying Government housing at weekly rates between \$44 and \$47.50, what consideration was given to the wide disparities in the conditions and standards of Government Employees' Housing Authority housing?

- (2) Why was no special provision made in establishing these standardised rentals for the particular conditions facing residents north of the 26th parallel where Government employees will be placed at a more marked disadvantage compared with those eligible for accommodation provided by mining companies?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

- (1) Rentals are determined on the basis of accommodation and facilities provided having regard for rentals charged by the State Housing Commission for comparable new three bedroom accommodation.
- (2) The standard of housing provided is regulated within the availability of funding and it is unreasonable to expect all housing to be of equivalent standard to that provided by mining companies.

HOUSING: STATE HOUSING COMMISSION

Staff: Establishment Ceiling

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

- (1) With reference to his answer to question 691 of 28 April 1982, how does he explain the apparent discrepancy between the State Housing Commission salaried staff establishment ceiling of 700 and the actual staff establishment as at 28 February 1982, of 649?
- (2) Which positions were vacant and in which offices of the commission did these vacancies exist as at 28 February 1982?
- (3) What is the average time for which these positions had been vacant?

Mr SHALDERS replied:

- (1) Salaried staff positions become vacant on a regular basis due to retirements, resignations, promotions within and outside the State Housing Commission.

When a position becomes vacant it is a requirement to review the continued need for the position having regard to systems and organisational changes.

- (2) As at 28 February 1982, there were 51 positions vacant comprising—

Clerical items	25
General items	20
Professional items	6

and these were at the following offices—

Head office	36
Metropolitan regions	
Mirrabooka	4
Victoria Park	6
Fremantle	3
Country regions	
Albany	1
Merredin	1

- (3) For those items where the continued need was determined the average time of vacancy was three months.

789. *This question was postponed.*

HOUSING: COUNTRY

Vacancies

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

How many units of State Housing Commission accommodation are currently vacant in the following towns—

- (a) Albany;
- (b) Bencubbin;
- (c) Beverley;
- (d) Boyup Brook;
- (e) Bridgetown;
- (f) Bruce Rock;
- (g) Brunswick Junction;
- (h) Bunbury;
- (i) Busselton;
- (j) Capel;
- (k) Collie;
- (l) Corrigin;
- (m) Cunderdin;
- (n) Southern Cross;
- (o) Mukinbudin;
- (p) Merredin;
- (q) Kellerberrin;
- (r) Nungarin;
- (s) Trayning;
- (t) Narembeen;
- (u) Kondinin;
- (v) Kulin;
- (w) Narrogin;
- (x) Katanning;
- (y) Dowerin;

- (z) Koorda;
- (aa) Goomalling;
- (bb) Wyalkatchem;
- (cc) Northam;

and what are the categories of accommodation vacant in each area?

Mr SHALDERS replied:

The number of vacant State Housing Commission rental houses in the following towns are—

	COMMONWEALTH STATE SCHEME				ABORIGINAL HOUSING SCHEME			
	PENS	2BR	3BR	4BR	PENS	2BR	3BR	4BR
Albany		7	5	3				
Bencubbin			6					
Beverley		1	1				1	
Boyup Brook			1	1				
Bridgetown			2				1	
Bruce Rock		4	5					
Brunswick Jn.								
Bunbury	6	11	15					1
Busselton			4					
Capel		1	2					
Collie		4	3				1	
Corrigin			2					
Cunderdin		1	5				1	
Southern Cross		3	2				1	
Mukinbudin			2					
Merredin	1	2	3				1	
Kellerberrin		4	7				1	
Nungarin			1					
Trayning			2					
Narembeen		2	2					
Kondinin		4	5					
Kulin		2	7					
Narrogin		4	5				1	1
Katanning		1	3					
Dowerin			3					
Koorda		1	6					
Goomalling	1		3				3	
Wyalkatchem			2					
Northam	1	5	7				2	1

ROAD

Denham-Overlander

791. Mr BRIAN BURKE, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Did he give an assurance to the Shark Bay Chamber of Commerce or other residents of Shark Bay in October last year, that the remaining unsealed section of the Overlander-Denham Road would be completed within two years?
- (2) Is he aware that non-completion of the road is severely affecting the economy of the town of Denham?
- (3) In view of there being no all-weather airstrip and an adequate air service, will he seek the completion of the sealing of the road as a matter of high priority?

Mr RUSHTON replied:

- (1) and (2) As a result of strong representations from the member for Gascoyne and both members for Lower North Province, I personally inspected the road in October last year. During the visit to Denham, discussions were held on the desirability of determining a timetable for completing the seal of the road. Various possibilities were discussed.

As a result of my visit I requested the Commissioner of Main Roads to advise on a suitable timetable and cost for blacktopping the remaining 59 km of this road. I am aware that sealing of the road would be appreciated by the business community and people of Denham.

- (3) I am advised that the estimated cost, in October 1981 prices, to blacktop this road is some \$4.5 million. The timetable is to complete this work by the end of 1986 and represents a considerable increased effort and financial allocation to the project.

The Main Roads Department's 1982-83 programme is now under detailed consideration and this work is being given a high priority along with other important projects.

RAILWAYS: FREIGHT *Joint Venture: Accounts*

792. Mr STEPHENS, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) With regard to the joint venture company to be formed by Westrail and Mayne Nickless, will the accounts and a report on trading operations be tabled each year in Parliament?
- (2) If "No", why not?
- (3) As 50 per cent of the proposed company will belong to the people of Western Australia, who must therefore be regarded as shareholders?

Mr RUSHTON replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) There is no requirement under the Government Railways Act for the Joint Venture Company to report to Parliament. This company will be a proprietary limited company and must keep and file accounts in accordance with the provisions of the Companies Act 1961.

Of course Westrail's published profit and loss figures—which are tabled—would also show the Railways Commission share of the joint partnership enterprise.

- (3) The shareholders will be Mayne Nickless Ltd. and the Railways Commission.

HEALTH: MENTAL *Community Development Centre*

793. Mr COWAN, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Is it a fact that the community development centre will be closed?
- (2) If "Yes", what is the reason for the closure?
- (3) Have any initiatives been taken by the Government to ensure that the counselling and extension work undertaken by officers of the community development centre in country areas will be continued?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) Yes. The premises at Selby Street will continue to be available to community groups who have existing commitments.
- (2) Redeployment of staff to improve the efficiency of the community psychiatric division and to ensure a more efficient use of existing resources.
- (3) Counselling was not part of the brief of the community development centre. Some of the CDC staff with suitable qualifications will be transferred to the health education unit of the Public Health Department. The augmented health education unit will be able to promote the concept of total health—both mental and physical health will be promoted, rather than the artificial division into physical or mental health.

Country extension work will be continued by the health education unit and by the community psychiatric division as appropriate.

794 and 795. *These questions were postponed.*

WATER RESOURCES: DAM *Harris River*

796. Mr T. H. JONES, to the Minister for Water Resources:

What is the estimated cost for the construction of a dam on the Harris River at Collic?

Mr MENSAROS replied:

As investigation and design has not yet been completed, no firm estimates for the construction of a dam on the Harris River have been prepared.

Preliminary estimates for the dam only, used during the early planning phase, showed that the cost will be in excess of \$10 million in 1980 values.

RAILWAYS

Collie

797. Mr T. H. JONES, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Is it fact that new Westrail barracks are to be built at Collie?
- (2) If "Yes", what crews will use the barracks, and will the building of the barracks reduce the work available for Collie railwaymen?

Mr RUSHTON replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Barracks are being provided to help relieve a critical accommodation problem being experienced by single Westrail men at Collie.
It is not envisaged that the work of railway men stationed at Collie will be affected.

FUEL AND ENERGY: ELECTRICITY

Power Station: Bunbury

798. Mr T. H. JONES, to the Minister for Fuel and Energy:

As a result of the boring programme which has been initiated at Collie, have supplies of sufficient water been proven which would permit the new power station to be built on the coalfield instead of Bunbury?

Mr P. V. JONES replied:

No. The member will be aware that there are many factors involved in consideration of the siting of a major new power station, only one of which is the adequacy of water supplies. As the member has previously been advised, the Bunbury site was chosen as the best available on the balance of all the factors that must be considered.

HOUSING

Mr R. Orton

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

Referring to the willingness he expressed in the Parliament earlier this week to take a personal interest in the housing problem for a single blind person in Port Hedland when it was made public in a newspaper article, will he take the same interest in the housing problem of Mr R. Orton, a 60-year-old Aboriginal person of Carnarvon who is being required by the State Housing Commission to quit his old two-bedroomed asbestos house after 14 years' residence because his family has grown up and moved away, without being offered any alternative accommodation?

Mr SHALDERS replied:

I reviewed this matter some time ago as a result of the representation made to me by the Minister for Lands and member for Gascoyne (the Hon. Ian Laurance, MLA).

I understand you also wrote recently to the general manager of the commission regarding the same matter and a reply was forwarded to you in a letter dated 3 May.

HEALTH

Rockingham Property

800. Mr COWAN, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Can he tell me who authorised the purchase of premises at 163 Kent Street, Rockingham?
- (2) What was the purchase price, and who provided the money?
- (3) What is the intended use of the premises?
- (4) Has an estimation been made of the amount of money necessary to convert the premises and make them suitable for their intended use?
- (5) Have funds been appropriated for that purpose?
- (6) (a) Will Town Planning Board approval be necessary for rezoning of the land upon which the premises are situated; and
(b) if it is, when will approval be given?
- (7) When does the Government expect this project to be completed?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) to (5) and (7) I understand that this premises has been purchased by Serenity Lodge Inc. This is a body over which I have no jurisdiction. These questions should be directed to Serenity Lodge Inc.
- (6) (a) and (b) This is not a matter which comes within my jurisdiction.

HEALTH: ALCOHOL AND DRUG AUTHORITY

Rehabilitation Programmes

801. Mr COWAN, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Has the Alcohol and Drug Authority or any other Government body evaluated or caused to be evaluated the effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes for alcohol dependent persons in Western Australia?
- (2) If "Yes"—
 - (a) is the evaluation available to the public;
 - (b) how many Alcohol and Drug Authority centres were evaluated;
 - (c) how many independent centres were evaluated;
 - (d) how did the performances of the centres in (b) and (c) compare?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) (a) Yes; the Quo Vadis evaluation study was the subject of a paper delivered by Mr Ian Smith, research psychologist, Alcohol and Drug Authority, at a conference on "The Use and Abuse of Alcohol—A Health Issue of the 80's" held at the University of Western Australia on 20 May, 1981, under the auspices of ANZSERCH/APHA;
- (b) one; the Quo Vadis Centre.
- (c) One—a study of Serenity Lodge which has not yet been completed;
- (d) results of (c) not yet available.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

FUEL AND ENERGY: GAS

North-West Shelf: Sales

269. Mr BRIAN BURKE, to the Premier:

I refer the Premier to his answer to question 737 on Tuesday, 4 May. In answer to a question as to whether

Alcoa had agreed on the price it is prepared to pay for the gas it has indicated it will purchase, the Premier said, "I am advised that agreement has been reached." Referring to the Premier's response and an inquiry of and from Alcoa which says that agreement has not been reached and negotiations are proceeding, would the Premier please inform the House how he was able to say agreement had been reached when Alcoa deny that fact, and could he further attempt to confirm the true situation and convey it to the House?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

The answer I gave to the Leader of the Opposition was in accordance with advice I had. I have no reason to doubt that at this stage; however, I am quite happy to seek confirmation on that particular point and let the Leader of the Opposition have that advice in due course.

WATER RESOURCES

Sirofloc Plant

270. Mr NANOVIK, to the Minister for Water Resources:

Are the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament that "the Sirofloc plant has not processed a gallon of water yet"—or words to this effect—factual?

Mr MENSAROS replied:

In some quarters it is fashionable to belittle Australian technological development.

The Sirofloc process which was developed by CSIRO represents the first major innovation in water treatment for several decades.

The first Sirofloc plant in the world was constructed at Mirrabooka by the Commonwealth Government to evaluate the capabilities of the process. It has been operated by the water board since March 1981.

From March 1981 to July 1981 the plant processed 1 430 ml—314.7 million gallons—and from November 1981 to April 1982, 1 110 ml—244.3 million gallons—of water.

The plant has demonstrated its ability to produce water to the quality

specification required. It received the "Plant of the Year Award" for 1981 from the Society of Chemical Industry of Victoria. A contract to build a Sirofloc plant in Tasmania has recently been awarded.

Apparently, the spy system of the Leader of the Opposition has broken down.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Carnarvon Shire Council

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

The Minister stated yesterday that she is not aware of any problem relating to the accounting procedures of the Shire of Carnarvon. Is it not a fact that some time ago the Secretary for Local Government drew to her attention the deficiencies in the Shire of Carnarvon accounting procedures?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

It is not a fact that the Carnarvon accounting procedures have been drawn to my attention. It is a fact that today, as I had been asked a question yesterday, I made special inquiries in my department to find out whether anything of that sort had come across my desk, and I found that it had not.

There has been some correspondence between the local authority and the Secretary for Local Government which has been on a departmental basis and not a Minister basis. If the member for Morley is talking about the situation which pertained some 12 months to two years ago—the member for Gascoyne tells me it is two years ago—it is true that there was a financial problem. I would not have said that it was an accounting procedure problem. I met that council on two occasions specifically to discuss finance, and since that time the council has been forwarding its accounts to our department. However, that was not an accounting procedure, it was a financial difficulty. I am aware of that matter, but not of an accounting procedure.

FUEL AND ENERGY: GAS

North-West Shelf: Wages

272. Mr WILLIAMS, to the Premier:

Does the Premier have any clear indication of the way wages have exploded on the North-West Shelf project, and what effect the wages explosion is having on the eventual outcome of the project?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

Wages for workers employed on the North-West Shelf project, whether employed at Jervoise Bay, Geraldton, or Burrup Peninsula, have risen by about 80 per cent in a little over 18 months. This massive increase has been entirely as a result of Industrial Arbitration Commission decisions, State and Federal, and has nothing to do with any "sweetheart" deals or anything of the kind. It is a simple fact that Industrial Commissions have almost doubled the wages bill of the project in less than two years. I will give two examples, one State and one Federal, which are indicative of all classifications: Take a grade 3 welder on a State award working at Jervoise Bay or Geraldton. His total wages are 85.7 per cent higher than they were on 1 June 1980—I repeat, an 85 per cent increase in less than two years; or, take a carpenter on a federal award at Burrup Peninsula. In the same period, his wages have gone up 78.9 per cent.

It should not take much thought by members to realise what a tremendous strain such huge increases impose on a project like the North-West Shelf. And it should not take much thought for anyone to realise what a tremendous effect these wages have on Australian firms when competing with overseas firms for contracts.

The Government has consistently warned the Australian worker that he is pricing himself out of the market, and that he is making it difficult and in some cases impossible for projects to get started. We have asked industrial tribunals to consider the unemployed and those who are likely to lose their jobs when varying awards.

This evidence of increases averaging more than 80 per cent for a 40-hour week in less than two years demonstrates the need for the sort of restraint for which the Government has been calling.

FUEL AND ENERGY: GAS

North-West Shelf: Wages

273. Mr BRIAN BURKE, to the Premier:

I ask the Premier whether I heard correctly his answer to say that wage rises have doubled the cost of the project during the period to which he referred? Perhaps he could refer back to the answer and read that part again.

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

I said the wages had increased almost double in the two years, and I quoted the figure 85.7 per cent. I said the effect it would have on the cost of the project—

Mr Brian Burke: Is to double.

Mr O'CONNOR: The Leader of the Opposition should look at the answer to the question.

FUEL AND ENERGY: ELECTRICITY

Power Station: Esperance

274. Mr GREWAR, to the Minister for Fuel and Energy:

- (1) Has the Minister considered the establishment of a small coal-fired power station at Esperance to replace the diesel system previously used to utilise locally available lignite?
- (2) In view of the proven and inferred tonnages, does he not agree that such facilities would prove a useful forerunner to widespread use of the coal?
- (3) Could he influence the Federal Government to assist in this project due to the widespread deposits similar in quality to that found in Esperance that occurs in the southern areas of three States?

Mr P. V. JONES replied:

- (1) to (3) The brown coal deposits near Esperance are encouraging resources for the future, but at present formidable technical problems are associated with burning the coal in either pulverised fuel or fluidised bed boilers. Extensive testing programmes are about to commence by the discovering company, in co-operation with the State Energy Commission, to provide basic data with regard to the combustion properties of the coal and parameters required for boiler design.

This Government, through the State Energy Commission, will do its utmost to develop Esperance coal, should the technical problems associated with this development be overcome.

MITCHELL, W. W.

Preselection

275. Mr PEARCE, to the Premier:

Further to a previous question, now that Mr W. W. Mitchell has been recommended in the preselection for the seat of Gosnells, would the Premier advise if it is his Government's intention to terminate Mr Mitchell's contract as a political adviser during his period as a candidate?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

The situation has not been considered at this stage.

EDUCATION: PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Microcomputer

276. Mr BRYCE, to the Honorary Minister Assisting the Minister for Education:

- (1) What progress has been made in the process of approving a microcomputer for use in primary schools?
- (2) What support will the Government give to primary schools using computers?

Mr CLARKO replied:

- (1) I am pleased to announce today that the Acorn BBC microcomputer has been approved for use in primary schools. This computer was selected by an expert committee from the 16 submissions received. It costs approximately \$2 600.

- (2) (a) The Government will provide a dollar for dollar subsidy for up to 30 schools in a full financial year. The intention is not to foster a proliferation of computers in primary schools. Rather it is to ensure an orderly and managed development of what currently is an uncharted area of education. The Government is not of the view that every primary school should have a computer. It believes that it is for the parents and teachers in each school to make the decision as to whether a computer will be of sufficient educational benefit to justify its cost.
- (b) The Government will provide free maintenance and software for those schools which obtain approval to purchase the approved equipment. In addition the schools computing section, which already provides a considerable amount of assistance to schools, will provide advice and teacher training.

TOWN PLANNING

City of Perth

277. Mr DAVIES, to the Minister for Urban Development and Town Planning:

When is it likely finality will be reached on the town planning scheme for the City of Perth which is long overdue?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

I preface my remarks to the member for Victoria Park by saying that I wish I had a crystal ball. The scheme has now been lodged with the department and I have been advised that it will probably take something in the vicinity of two months before it is fully assessed; then it will come to me. I believe that after that there may be some situations that exist which will require another advertising period or something of that sort because of the changes that have been made since the scheme was advertised. We will be doing our very best to minimise that. The member will be aware of the concern expressed in the community because this scheme was first advertised in 1976, and many ratepayers would like the opportunity to comment in 1982. I wish I could say it will reach finality in two months. I know that will not be the

case but I have briefly commented to this House on the facts as I know them.

EDUCATION: TEACHERS

Unemployed

278. Mr PEARCE, to the Honorary Minister Assisting the Minister for Education:

Following yesterday's Press revelations that something like half of the primary graduates from last year are still unemployed in either Government or private schools, can the Minister advise the number of graduates—and there is a large number running into several hundreds if not thousands of teachers, including those who are experienced teachers but have left the teaching force for some reason or other and wish to re-enter it—who are unemployed and the employment prospects for those experienced teachers who wish to re-enter the teaching service?

Mr CLARKO replied:

The situation this year was that there were just over 900 graduates available for teaching positions who had graduated from the various teaching institutions in 1981. Over 100 primary school teaching graduates had received appointments approximately one week before the beginning of the school year but the number has increased somewhat since then. In regard to secondary education, over 180 graduates received appointments a week before the beginning of the school year and of that number, 10 had graduated 12 months earlier. Therefore, approximately 300 out of the 900 graduates received employment.

In addition, appointments have been made in the other two education systems, that is, the independent system and the Catholic systemic system. I am advised that the number of appointments could be about 150. This gives us a total of 450 employed and leaves us with 450 unemployed at the beginning of the year. It is expected that by September 250 more graduates will have received positions, so that would leave approximately 200 unemployed. Of the number remaining, graduates who are not available to teach anywhere in the State are included. That could include the lady who topped the course

at the Churchlands College; but because she is married she is not available to teach anywhere but in the metropolitan area.

Mr Pearce: Does that mean that lady will not get a job because of that?

Mr CLARKO: I am informed that the department policy is that people who do not make themselves available for employment throughout the State are not considered before those who are available. If the member is suggesting that such a person should get a job I agree that one can look at it from that point of view if one likes.

It was decided this year that the number of graduates enrolling for primary teaching should be decreased from 700 to 600. However, since I took up my appointment I have discussed the matter and suggested that consideration should be given to perhaps having a lower intake. At that time they informed me that the number of entrants to primary school teacher training would actually be about 450. I am concerned about the position.

With regard to secondary graduates the figures published the other day showed that 62 per cent of last year's graduates have already been appointed to the Government service so far this year, so obviously the final figure will be higher than that. From the schedules that have been provided I note that virtually all the Nedlands college graduates from the previous year—that is, 1980—received appointments. Even those teachers in social science received positions.

I would like to say emphatically to those young people considering teaching as a career that they should not be driven away because of the situation that currently applies in Western Australia. I hope that young men and women will look with confidence to considering a teaching career.

RAILWAYS: FREIGHT

Joint Venture: Effects

279. Mr SIBSON, to the Minister for Transport:

In regard to the proposed joint venture agreement, what will be the effects on—

- (1) The workers likely to be affected within Westrail?
- (2) The local transport operators currently delivering from Westrail to local communities—for example, Bunbury?
- (3) The benefits to local users of the Westrail joint venture?
- (4) The taxpayers in general?

Mr RUSHTON replied:

First, I point out that no-one will lose his job as a result of the joint venture.

Mr Brian Burke: You would not know. They would not have told you yet.

Mr RUSHTON: They ought to call the Leader of the Opposition "Mr Bagpipe". However, I do not want to offend the Scottish.

Mr Brian Burke: You are an old woman. The only thing you are good at is adjourning the House before we should.

Mr RUSHTON: In answer to the member for Bunbury—

- (1) There will be no sackings.

Mr Parker: Why don't you sit down and let me ask a question about three senior executives who were sacked from the MTT this week?

Mr RUSHTON: If that is the way members opposite want to waste their opportunities, they may as well continue.

Mr Terry Burke: You are just following instructions.

Mr RUSHTON: I will start again. The reply is as follows—

- (1) There will be no sackings. There will be alternative work which has been described. One major item has been the taking of leave, and in the long term the opportunity for staff within Westrail will be enhanced because they will have an improved service in which to work.
- (2) The member will be aware that a carrier by the name of John Kelly has been organising a service in Bunbury. Service can be provided through local distribution, as other carriers in Bunbury do, or through mainline haulage for general freights from Perth to Bunbury.

- (3) The member asked about the benefits to local users of the Westrail joint venture, and, of course, the joint venture is only one of the operators involved in the benefits which will come from the opening up to competition and deregulation of the industry. Obviously where adequate services are not generated through competition, there will be a franchise service or a subsidy to ensure there are satisfactory services.

- (4) Competition is expected to give improved services at competitive rates and, of course, the savings are expected to be about \$7 million by 1985.

Members will be aware that freight is deregulated to the north-west and in the metropolitan area. As this policy has been successful, there is every confidence that the implementation of the new policy to be introduced on or about 1 July will be successful. There is no reason it should not be. The challenge is there to Westrail and to road transport operators to respond to deregulation, freedom of choice, and competition. In my opinion the customers will gain extensively.

Mr Barnett: Turn the paper upside down and start again!

Mr RUSHTON: Has the member finished? If he wants to go on like this all afternoon, I am quite happy to do that.

Mr Bryce: The Speaker would not tolerate that. He has a sense of fairness.

Mr Pearce: The time for questions is very limited.

The SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order.

Mr RUSHTON: I will not go back to the beginning again.

Mr Brian Burke: Come on—don't be a spoilsport.

Mr RUSHTON: In conclusion, I would like to say that the people about whom the member for Bunbury is concerned will receive the benefits of these new policies.

Obviously they will be very appreciative of his effort in making representations about this new policy as it relates to Bunbury and the general region. The people who receive freight into Bunbury will benefit from deregulation, freedom of choice, and competition.

STATE FINANCE: TAX SHARING

Relativities

280. Mr DAVIES, to the Treasurer:

Will the revised relativities recommended by the Grants Commission require amendment to the States tax sharing and health grants legislation?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

I am not quite sure what amendments will be required. However, I assure the member for Victoria Park that we are not happy to accept the recommendations of the Grants Commission at all. As the member well knows, the relativities apply to almost every aspect of Government spending—health, education, etc.

Mr Brian Burke: But will the relativities require amendments to the Act? That was the question.

Mr O'CONNOR: I have answered that already. I am not sure whether any amendment will be required. I assure the member that at this stage we are not happy with or prepared to accept the recommendation of the Grants Commission.

TRANSPORT: BUSES

MTT: Sackings

281. Mr PARKER, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Is it correct that three senior executives of the Metropolitan Transport Trust—namely, the secretary of either

the managing director or the board, a senior finance and accounting officer, and a senior engineer—were either sacked or asked to resign on Monday or Tuesday of this week, and in one case, one of the people was actually escorted physically off the premises?

- (2) Is it correct that they were asked to resign for alleged disloyalty to the MTT?
- (3) If that was the case, what was the alleged disloyalty?

Mr RUSHTON replied:

- (1) to (3) I am not aware of all the details of the matter about which the member asks. I am aware that the situation at the MTT was reported to the Chairman of the Public Service Board and that certain decisions were made. If the member will place his question on the notice paper, I will obtain details about the people involved.

Mr Parker: Yes, and the nature of the disloyalty.
