



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

THIRTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION
1997

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 12 March 1997

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 12 March 1997

THE SPEAKER (Mr Strickland) took the Chair at 11:00 am, and read prayers.

STATEMENT - SPEAKER

THE SPEAKER (Mr Strickland): I have authorised the seating changes requested by the Leader of the Opposition in accordance with Standing Order No 61.

BILLS (2) - INTRODUCTION AND FIRST READING

1. Professional Standards Bill

Bill introduced, on motion by Mr Prince (Minister for Health), and read a first time.

2. Public Sector Management Amendment Bill

Bill introduced, on motion by Mr Brown, and read a first time.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from 11 March.

MR BAKER (Joondalup) [11.03 am]: It is a great honour indeed to join this Chamber as the new member for Joondalup. I take this opportunity to congratulate all new and re-elected members of Parliament on both sides of this Chamber. I also take this opportunity to thank you, Mr Speaker, and the staff of Parliament House for the tremendous courtesy and friendliness I have received since my election to this House.

I wish to place on public record my sincere thanks not only to the electors of Joondalup, my wife, Sarah, and my children Michelle and Jonathan, but also to the scores of hard working individuals who helped me and the Liberal Party in our election campaign. I particularly thank Mr Richard Self, my campaign chairman. He was catapulted into that role at short notice and worked on the campaign on average 12 hours a day during the two months prior to the election. Dick is a thoroughly committed Liberal, and without his tremendous assistance I would not be standing here today.

Mr Speaker, I also thank the other hard working members of my campaign committee: Mr Ray Foster, President of the Wanneroo Chamber of Commerce; Mr Tom Carstairs; Mr Ashley Hassell; Mr Russell Poliwka, President of the Regional Economic Development Group and the Joondalup Business Association; Mrs Lesley Goudie; Mrs Kath White; Mr Ian Goodenough; Mr Terry Darby-Smith; Mrs Marie-Louise Wordsworth; Mr Rocky Pinzone; Mr Ron Privilege; Mr Ravi Chander; Mr John Ryan; the members of the Edith Cowan University Liberal Students' Club, particularly Mr Tony Goodman and Mr Richard Orchard; Mr Geoff Curry; and the scores of volunteers who assisted with letterbox drops, the distribution of how-to-vote cards at the various polling booths, and the scrutineering of the count. I also thank Dr Alan Eggleston, Liberal Senator for Western Australia, for his much valued assistance, guidance and advice on all matters political over the past eight years. Last but by no means least, I thank the Premier of Western Australia, Hon Richard Court, for his tremendous leadership of our State since the 1993 state election.

Having been elected, I am now fully aware that I have much to learn in this Chamber and do in my electorate to continue to justify the confidence which the electors of Joondalup have shown in me.

I wish to provide the House at this early stage with a broad overview of the electorate of Joondalup, its geographical boundaries, and its electors. The electorate of Joondalup is a large, essentially urbanised area. Its northern boundary extends from the coast east along Burns Beach Road to the western edge of Lake Joondalup, heads south along the western extremity of Lake Joondalup to Ocean Reef Road, along Ocean Reef Road, then south via Eddystone Avenue and west to the coast, via Craigie Drive, Marmion Avenue and Mullaloo Drive. It encompasses the suburbs of Edgewater, Connolly, Ocean Reef, Joondalup, Heathridge, Currabine, Iluka, Beaumaris, Mullaloo and Beldon and has an area of approximately 35 square kilometres.

Joondalup has at its heart the areas commonly known as the Joondalup central business district and Joondalup business park, which are referred to collectively as the Joondalup regional city centre. It also has as its heart several key educational institutions such as the Joondalup campus of Edith Cowan University, the North Metropolitan College of TAFE, the Australian Institute of University Studies, and the Joondalup campus of Curtin University.

Mr Speaker, the electorate of Joondalup typifies all that is characteristically Western Australian. It is a young, growing and vibrant electorate, and the key to its ongoing success for both families and small business is the need to maintain strong trends in economic and social growth and development.

Over 30 per cent of the population of Joondalup is under 13 years of age. There are some 24 000 electors on the roll and some 60 000 residents. The electorate is blessed with several excellent state and private schools, the Lakeside regional shopping centre, and several smaller suburban shopping centres, an efficient rail and bus service, and a beautiful coastline, not to mention Lake Joondalup. It is without doubt the best region in the Perth metropolitan area for families to live in and to raise young children. Put simply, that is why my wife and I and our two young children live there.

Our party's victory in winning the seat of Joondalup was not so much a victory for me or for my party or its policies. Rather, it was a victory for the 11 000-odd right-minded, reasonable thinking and inquiring electors who blessed me with their vote. Despite the fact that the electorate is relatively young both demographically and in terms of its political history, the electors of Joondalup were easily able to make a responsible choice between the need to maintain high levels of economic growth, relatively low levels of unemployment, and sound financial management as opposed to unfunded, uncosted, Bankcard-style election promises. The overwhelming majority of electors of Joondalup took a responsible position and decided to cast a vote not just for their future but also for the future of their children and grandchildren. Through their everyday experiences in managing household budgets they were well aware that spending what one does not have will only cause economic and social ruin in the long term. They were rightly cynical of any political party that outspent our party in its election promises on a \$3 for \$1 basis. They were well aware that when assessing how a political party would represent them in the State Parliament that they needed only look to its past performance to assess its future performance. They were not about to be fooled by any political party which offered a passive surrender shortly before the election. They wanted to build on their future and that of their children and grandchildren, and not turn back. They were simply not prepared to hand back the good government of this state and their families' welfare to any political party which, on a state and federal basis, had a shocking record of economic and social mismanagement on a massive scale.

Mr Speaker, the electors of Joondalup were not prepared to allow their vote to be bought by any political party that was prepared to engage in a Dutch auction, because they were aware at all times that ultimately their hard-earned taxpayers' dollars would fund any election promises. Fortunately, the electors of Joondalup were not stupid. They were rightly cynical, and despite the relative youth of the electorate they were able to cast their votes in a mature and responsible manner. They were well aware that in relatively tough economic times any investment, be it in a home, a car or a political party, had to be one of the most shrewd decisions they could make, and as to the latter, they would be stuck with that decision for some four years.

Irrespective of how they voted, the electors were well aware that the key issues in the Joondalup election campaign were health, education, law and order and transport. The majority of electors realised that many law and order and social problems had been caused or substantially contributed to by previous successive state and federal Labor Governments, which in many respects had torn into the very fabric of our society and its cornerstone - the family unit. They were also well aware that Labor's political ideologies of the past had artificially contrived divisions in the family, the workplace and the broader society.

Mr Speaker, all of the electors of Joondalup simply want an opportunity to better themselves, and to improve their and their children's circumstances. More than 25 per cent of the electors of Joondalup were born overseas. Just like the first settlers in Australia, they migrated to Western Australia to make a fresh start in life, to break from the shackles of their past, their social and financial status; and with a view to improving their standing in society in general, and that of their families. Their first and primary concern was and will always be to seek financial security for their families, to house, educate, feed and clothe their children, and to create a sound future for their families. Most of those electors realise that the key to all things in life is a sound formal and, to a lesser extent, informal education. They realised that education is the greatest tool to attain upward social mobility and to improve their family's circumstances.

Mr Speaker, I also take this opportunity to express my personal views on a few matters which are of great concern to the electors of Joondalup. I refer here to the issues of unemployment, and the provision of important government services, such as health, education and transport. First, I will deal with the issue of unemployment. We are all well aware that unemployment, especially among our youth, is the most insidious, modern social plague besetting our State and nation. Unemployment has devastating social consequences ranging from youth suicide, drug use, crime, and law and order problems to lack of self-esteem, despondency, marital breakdown and moral decay. I know that it is an old cliché, but the older I get the more I understand that "the devil makes work for idle hands and minds." I am sure that members on both sides of this Chamber will appreciate the need to implement and foster policies that will create more employment, especially for our youth. With more than 40 per cent of my electorate aged under 22 years,

I am well aware of how important the unemployment issue is, and will be at the next state election. The question of course is how do we attack the unemployment issue.

Despite what members opposite may believe, history has proven time and again that one key way of reducing unemployment is to implement and foster policies which give incentives to the private sector, especially the small business sector - the latter being the largest single employer group in our State. It is the private sector, especially the small business sector, which creates real, meaningful, long term jobs, not the public sector or for that matter the trade union movement. It is the role of the Government to promote an environment in which economic growth and development, initiative and enterprise are ably rewarded, and unnecessary and frustrating government controls are reduced. These factors inter alia will, in due course, reduce unemployment.

To attain this goal it is most important that we further deregulate the labour market, the industrial relations system and strike a better deal on all forms of taxation with the Federal Government within the commonwealth-state financial relationship. We and our fellow States must strike a better deal for the States within our federation to ensure that the tax collecting, revenue raising powers of the Federal Government are shared more equitably with the States because the States are in a far better position to accurately and ably assess and address the ongoing needs of the people and are far more responsive to their changing needs and circumstances.

Mr Speaker, if our State and nation are to progress, we must, in so far as is reasonably practicable, reduce unreasonable or unnecessary government control or intervention across the board, both in the economy and in the labour market, because ultimately unfair controls discourage initiative. If the incentive is sufficient, the individual will, through his or her initiatives and resources endeavour to increase the availability of goods and services and thereby provide more jobs in our society. On the other hand, if restrictive measures are applied against the individual, the natural human innate reaction is to reduce supply so as to seek a maximum reward for minimum personal effort and risk of capital. We live in a free enterprise system which is largely dependent upon the private sector to stimulate economic growth and development. In a free enterprise system it is the private sector which, in the first instance, creates the wealth in our society which is subsequently taxed by the various arms of government and thereby raises the much needed revenue and social dividends to fund the key areas of health, education and transport. Put simply, money does not grow on trees; it grows on individual endeavour and initiative. A healthy free enterprise economy which rewards and gives incentives to individual initiatives will grow at a rate sufficient to cater for the ongoing, ever increasing need for employment growth, especially for our youth. The lessons of history have shown that the creation of wealth and the appropriate taxation of that wealth is essential in meeting our state and national aspirations and improving our overall standard of living. History has also shown that competitive free enterprise, the free choice of consumers in the marketplace and individual efforts will maximise economic growth and national prosperity.

Mr Speaker, it is without question that government must be sufficiently responsive so that it can meet its proper obligations to its citizens in the key areas I have mentioned. It is also absolutely imperative that government should not compete with an efficient private sector. In that way it will eliminate all unnecessary burdens on the taxpayers. In view of what I have said on these two issues, my pledge to this Parliament is that I will remain true to the principles of free enterprise and a free market, and I will work in support of the individual.

One of the greatest lessons of history is that we fail sometimes to learn from those lessons. The lessons of history have shown time and again, especially in the past 10 years, that a socialist political system of whatever variety and a restrained and fettered marketplace is totally out of step with the innate worth of the individual and the need to create initiative and individual responsibility.

Mr Speaker, there can be no more fundamental truism in a free enterprise market economy than to say that we can deliver social dividends in the core areas of health, education and transport by creating wealth and then taxing it. This is the responsible way of delivering social dividends. To create wealth we must foster free enterprise. Put simply, we cannot help the poor by destroying the rich; we cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong; and we cannot help the wage earner by pulling down the wage payer. It is these fundamental principles that I will always bear in mind as I perform my duties as the duly elected representative of Joondalup. It is these messages that I will convey to my electors. I will ask that they in turn convey them to their children and their children's children. These messages are the key principles that we must never lose sight of if we are to build on our future and the future of our children and our children's children and properly fund the key areas of health, education and transport.

Mr Speaker, I thank the members of this House for giving me the opportunity to speak in this debate. I look forward to working with each and every member in this Chamber in continuing to build on the sound future for the people of this State which recommenced following the 1993 state election.

I consider I have been extremely lucky to have grown up in a free society and to be a fourth generation Australian. I undertake to the electors of Joondalup to use my best possible endeavours to ably and responsibly represent them, and to provide them with the opportunities that I have been given as a fellow Western Australian.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, and the members of this House for the courtesy extended to me during my first speech in this House.

[Applause.]

MR MacLEAN (Wanneroo) [11.22 am]: It gives me great pleasure to be in this place today to give my first speech in this House.

Mr Marlborough: We are delighted the member is here as well.

Mr MacLEAN: They told me the member for Peel is a clown, so it is okay.

Mr Speaker, I congratulate you on taking up that position. Knowing that you are a former teacher, I hope that you will not be reminded too much of your former occupation from the Chair. It is with great pleasure that I support the Address-in-Reply. I will continue the tradition of thanking those people who assisted me to come to this place. Specifically, I thank my campaign chairman, Mr Ray Halligan, who spent many hours in the campaign office doing the odds and sods jobs that allowed me to keep busy out on the road. I thank Mr Mick Nanovich, who is a former member of this place. He was an inspiration. His knowledge of the workings of this place and of the area of Wanneroo were invaluable to me. He was a great support to me. I thank not only Mr Tony Whight but also and, more importantly, his wife Dot, who excused him from painting the house during the election campaign so he could work with me.

The new seat of Wanneroo resulted from splitting the old seat of Wanneroo to become the seats of Joondalup and Wanneroo. Whereas Joondalup reflects the new in that it is nearly all urban, Wanneroo reflects not only the old, with traditional land use in market gardening and pastoral pursuits, but also the new with large areas of urbanisation in Clarkson, Merriwa and Neerabup, as well as established areas such as Marangaroo and Landsdale. I can remember when Marangaroo was no more than banksia woodland.

The history of Wanneroo commenced with the early settlement of this colony in the 1800s. Wanneroo was a cattle grazing area. The high watertable and lake lands provided good grazing for cattle, even in the driest of weather. Wanneroo very quickly became a food bowl for the new and growing area of Perth. Vegetable and salad growing became extremely important, even though in those days it took a full day to travel from Wanneroo to the Perth markets. The growers would leave late at night, or in the early evening, to avoid the heat of the day and sometimes not reach Perth until the following afternoon. The track, as Wanneroo Road was then, was no more than sand. In later times it was paved with jarrah log ends. These could be seen in Wanneroo Road until recently, especially around the Dog Swamp shopping area where on hot days the asphalt receded into the cracks of old log ends. That resulted in the removal of the old log ends and the construction of a new road, leaving very little evidence of the old Wanneroo Road.

Market gardening is a major industry for Wanneroo, and the area has produced some tremendous leaders in that industry. Wanneroo was the first site of a frozen vegetable plant in Western Australia. The plant was run by Mr John Crisafulli, who has been farming the same area for 40 years. He and his family now grow what are possibly the best cut flowers available in Western Australia. Wanneroo's climate is very suitable to strawberry production. Strawberries make up a major part of the industry. Strawberries are also a very high export earner for Western Australia, to not only South East Asia - strawberries eaten in the best restaurants in Hong Kong and Singapore probably come from Wanneroo - but also the Eastern States. That annoys them tremendously.

Wanneroo is changing. East of Wanneroo Road is earmarked for development into the twenty-first century. Many of the smaller market gardens are being developed as housing projects. This is both sad and exciting for people in the area. It is sad because it is changing the character of an area that has existed for over 100 years, and exciting because it brings new potential to an area that has been a cinderella to the Joondalup based Wanneroo City Council for 17 years. The rapid urban growth in Wanneroo has created problems. As I said earlier, I can remember when the suburb of Marangaroo was no more than two houses and banksia bushland; it is now a fully developed urban area. The area of Landsdale was market gardens and little else. It is now a thriving suburb. The development of the Crisafulli property east of Wanneroo Road will provide housing, schools and parkland. That will end some 40 or 50 years of primary production on that land. Development will not end there.

It is envisaged that in the future the town of Wanneroo will have a population of over 50 000 people. That will be a centre in its own right. It will not be the major centre for that area. Joondalup and Alkimos are both regional centres. At the moment Alkimos has a population of eight people.

Rapid urban growth exacerbates the problems that people experience in normal life. Transport has become a major problem in this area because many of the connector roads are developer driven. Because councils are unable to fund or forward-fund the development of these roads, which was the practice in the past, major connecting roads are left

unmade. This has caused considerable problems to the transport industry, which finds roads are going through areas that are not designed for bus services.

The rapid growth in population in the Wanneroo area has placed a tremendous strain on the education system. The schools in Clarkson and Merriwa, which is just across the road, have an enrolment of almost twice the normal school population, and it will continue to grow in the future. Although both schools are new - less than 10 years old - the population in those two suburbs is bursting at the seams. The Education Department has been extremely proactive in its endeavours to ease the overcrowding problems at schools. With the help of developers, it has extended the very successful schools in houses project into Neerabup, a new suburb, and into Mindarie. In Neerabup Homeswest acted as the developer and assisted with the provision of the houses. In Mindarie the Fini Group of Companies was very active in seeking approvals and building houses. Because this system of providing schools in new areas has been so successful, it is envisaged that it will extend into other areas to ease the burden on the permanent school base.

Many problems have been brought on by the skip-style development; that is, approvals have been issued to develop new suburbs which skip areas. Large areas of bushland at some stage in the future will be urban development. That has resulted in Connolly Drive, a connecting road, having large gaps in it, although it should continue to Joondalup.

At the last election the State Government showed that it was ready, willing and able to extend the Mitchell Freeway. It is my hope that by the end of this term the freeway will reach Burns Beach Road and that that construction will continue to Kinross, Clarkson and Merriwa. If Connolly Drive can be forward-funded and constructed, it will ease the pressure felt by residents in that area who are seeking the building of a freeway. The population in that area may not support the expenditure required to build a freeway, but would definitely support the development of Connolly Drive. Again, Connolly Drive is a developer driven road which will be extremely important in the long run, as well as the short term, but the developers are unwilling to fund it because they are unwilling to bring on their subdivisions. As the local council is unable to forward-fund these developments, it may be in the best interests of the State if the Government were to come to an agreement with the developers through LandCorp, the Government's land development arm.

Marmion Avenue is another developer driven road which is extremely important to people in the northern suburbs, in particular those at Yanchep and Two Rocks. Once Marmion Avenue reaches the south end of Yanchep, that area will no longer be the sleepy hollow it is now. Although many people will be upset that it is no longer a fishing village, many more will applaud the ability to travel to Perth without the long detours to Wanneroo Road. To travel from Yanchep to Joondalup or to a major shopping centre in the city away from Wanneroo means people must travel 16 kilometres to Wanneroo Road, down to Burns Beach Road, through Joondalup and onto the freeway to Perth - quite a detour. When Marmion Avenue is extended, it will mean a drive straight down that road to connect with the freeway.

Given the rapid development in this area over the past 20 years, I feel it is a very good time for all of us to take a deep breath and look at how the development has taken place and how it should take place in the future. This is a planning matter which many people are unwilling to take on. Is it fair to our youth - our children and our children's children - to allow the urban sprawl to continue? Would we be better off following an English system which allows village construction, although the villages are connected with main roads? Should the developers be required to build community facilities, or only interim facilities such as schools in houses and make available other areas that could be used for community purposes?

These problems have never been addressed. If members were to go to areas like Clarkson and Merriwa, which grew almost overnight, where people have had to endure a lack of provisional services for the past 10 years, they would be surprised as well as disappointed. The community there lacks some of the basic requirements that people in more established areas feel are necessities. In Wanneroo it is not unknown for parks to go unreticulated for some time; however, it is always disappointing that people buy into these areas with expectations of green ovals, schools and shopping centres. Perhaps the developers should be more careful when their glossy brochures are put together because the expectations that some people have are sometimes shattered overnight.

I do not intend to take up very much more of the time of the House. Mr Speaker, I thank you and the House for its indulgence during my speech. I also thank the people of Wanneroo. The majority that I received was very pleasing. It was a very hard seat to win. It is not what most people would call a blue-ribbon Liberal seat. It will take a lot of work for me to maintain it, and I intend to do that. I have been in the area for 16 years, if not in Wanneroo. I have represented the area on the local council. I know the people in the area. It is a tremendous thing for me to represent them, to take them into a new era. In four years when we go back to the polls I am sure the people of Wanneroo will re-elect me because I have been in the area and have worked for them, as I fully intend to do.

[Applause.]

MR CARPENTER (Willagee) [11.38 am]: The first thing I want to do as a member of Parliament is to thank the people who have granted me the privilege of being here, the electors of the seat of Willagee. I thank them for placing their faith and trust in me and, in return, I commit myself to doing my best to represent their interests in this Parliament for the next four years. I also thank the scores of people, more than 150, who helped me in my campaign; in particular my campaign director, Hon Cheryl Davenport, and my campaign manager, Ms Jo-Ann Whalley. Their tireless work and the efforts of everybody who helped in the campaign are greatly appreciated.

The seat of Willagee was formed after a redistribution of the boundaries of the seats of Melville and Cockburn. I pay tribute to the work done by the two members who previously represented those areas. They come from opposite sides of the Parliament - Hon Doug Shave, now the member for Alfred Cove, and Bill Thomas, still the member for Cockburn. Their hard work deserves recognition. Both received very high praise from many people who are now my constituents. I congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on your election and hope that the reforms you have previously publicly advocated become a reality. I notice that although today you are wearing the wig, yesterday you were not wearing it. That is an important, although perhaps small, reform. It also provides me with a cue to briefly outline some of the structure and reform of our Government which I would like to see changed or affectionately folded up and put in the cupboard over the next four years.

If I am lucky enough to serve in the Parliament again, I would prefer not to have to swear allegiance to the Queen of England, much as I admire her. I was disappointed I had to do so this time. I would rather swear allegiance to my own country, its laws and people as new Australian citizens are now required to do at citizenship ceremonies. By the time this four year term has ended I would like to be living in a Western Australia which is part of the republic of Australia with our own Australian head of state. Most of us now recognise that the time for this is well overdue.

I would like to see that important national symbol, the Australian flag, remade into something as distinctively Australian as the Canadian flag is to Canada. I would like to see a similar change to the Western Australian flag. I believe Government itself must be refashioned in this State to make it more truly representative of, and accountable to, the people. Many recommendations along these lines have already been made by both the Royal Commission into Commercial Activities of Government and Other Matters and the subsequent Commission on Government. I broadly support those recommendations.

As a starting point the basis of our democracy should be equality of voting power. One-vote-one-value should be enshrined as an immutable principle of our system. Reforms to reflect that principle should be effected for elections to both Houses of this Parliament, in single member constituencies of equal voting numbers for the lower House and in proportional representation either statewide or zoned in the upper House. This is a basic fundamental reform which should be delayed no longer. The upper House might then be able to act as a House of review instead of the function it has so far performed, the utility of which is somewhat harder to define.

I believe our parliamentary terms should be fixed at four years with the terms for both Houses beginning and ending on the same day. The present system can be unwieldy, as is being demonstrated. I believe our Constitution should be rewritten in clear and simple terms to make it accessible to everybody in the State. The rights of our citizens should be laid out in an incorporated or accompanying Bill of Rights.

I believe the position of Aboriginal people should be formally recognised in this new Constitution either as a preamble or in an accompanying document. That recognition should include the basic principle of native title as determined by the High Court. The historical place of Aboriginal people should be accorded a formal respect which has never been offered to them. I am not naive enough to suggest a simple document as a solution to the problem of Aboriginal people, but I believe it would be an important step. This is an area to which I would like to return later if time permits.

None of these reforms should be forced on people and should be adopted only after a clear demonstration of support from the people of this State. With that in mind I look forward to the early establishment of the proposed People's Convention on Government recommended by the Commission on Government. I know that you, Mr Speaker, have supported at least some of these proposals in the past and that thousands of hours have been spent arguing the pros and cons in debates. I will therefore not waste this Parliament's time by repeating what has been said better by others. I mention them in my first speech in Parliament because I believe they are important and, in some cases, fundamental reforms. They are the responsibility of elected politicians to address. I am now one of those elected politicians.

In one sense, I am grateful to the people who frustrated and defeated attempts at proper reform in the past for leaving such important work still undone. It is personally exciting to think that at least some of the changes I hope for might come about while I am in a position to be involved in the process and not as a mere observer.

They are some of the structures and symbols of Government which I would like to see change. More importantly, I believe it is the content of Government - what Government does and does not do - which needs reform. We must,

and can, provide better Government. The people of Western Australian want better Government. My experience doorknocking the Willagee electorate indicated that people were overwhelmingly negative towards politics, politicians and political candidates in general. That negativity came from voters on all sides and was directed at politicians on all sides. It is instructive that despite the poor showing of the Labor Party, at the recent election the Liberal Party could not muster 40 per cent of the primary vote across the State. The National Party maintained its small but important regional vote. There is a message in that for all of us.

People feel alienated from Government and find it hard to believe that any major political party is really interested in what is best for the people. In fact they find it hard to distinguish between the parties. Constant themes that emerged from my doorknocking, questionnaires and responses at the many public meetings I held last year were that people felt politicians were self-interested; political parties inwardly focussed; and Governments, both state and federal, driven by economic rationalism to the extent that numbers matter more than people.

There is a rising sense of insecurity in the community to a much greater degree than I had anticipated. Far from feeling comfortable, as John Howard would have us believe, most people are feeling decidedly uncomfortable. They blame both sides of politics for this. The basic security of having a job seems a thing of the past for many people. For those in work, there is an increasing perception that security of employment is a year by year proposition. Downsizing, redundancies and workplace agreements have seen to that. Employment contracts are ubiquitous. Invariably they are short term and the terms are getting shorter.

While campaigning I met numerous people who had lost their jobs. In some cases this was after decades of employment with a single employer. Many of these people had worked in the public sector and in most cases the impact of suddenly finding themselves unemployed was quite devastating. The prospect of ever getting a job again was remote and they knew it. There seemed to have been no accounting for their dignity as human beings or the simple dignity of having a job. It is a concept that many people in political life do not seem to understand. The simplistic idea that those shed from the public sector payroll will seamlessly roll over and be employed in the private sector just does not equate with reality.

Many private sector employers have been very busy downsizing. We all know that unemployment is high. Increasingly, those in employment are working longer hours. They are being asked to run like Lynford Christie just to stand still. They are insecure about keeping their jobs. Those losing their jobs are devastated and those already out of work have never been more pessimistic about obtaining it. However, insecurity, dignity and even pessimism do not seem to figure in the reckoning of the current economic rationalist policy making. They are human qualities.

The policies of economic rationalism reduce people to single, economic units whose output can be bought and sold like any other commodity in the marketplace, ideally unencumbered by relationships with third parties such as unions. The call for further labour market reform can be seen in this light. At one level it may be regarded as the benign desire to remove restrictive work practices and improve productivity and competitiveness. Equally, it can be code for an end to any notion of permanency in employment and the removal of employee benefits such as sick pay, holiday pay and shift penalties; in other words a work force that is easier to hire, easier to fire and cheaper to maintain. We must guard against that. This is the American and British model which has seen the rise of huge numbers of lowly paid, insecure workers in those countries, many of whom do not earn enough to support themselves or their families and so resort to other methods of obtaining income. We, too, risk creating large numbers of working poor and extending far beyond that group the rise in the level of general insecurity I mentioned earlier. Already many people in my electorate are in that category.

At the same time people see other changes that fill them with disquiet, concern and anxiety. The embrace of economic rationalist policies is seeing the role of government shrink to that of mere funder and regulator rather than provider of goods and services. The amount of funding and regulation Governments provide is also being reduced to an absolute minimum. The current economic orthodoxy is that Governments need only remove impediments to the free exchange of goods and services, and the rational choice of consumers making decisions in their own self-interest will lead to an equilibrium in which everybody is better off. Adam Smith first articulated this theory in his 1776 publication *The Wealth of Nations*. In essence, the belief is that if market forces are allowed to prevail, prosperity must surely follow. That is the direction in which government policy, both nationally and at a state level, has been and is taking us. We have a right to ask as a society just how far we should proceed down that path.

The Productivity Commission, for example, recently recommended the elimination of the remaining tariffs protecting the Australian car industry, despite the fact that their removal is likely to mean the end of the industry and the loss of thousands of jobs. Of course, Governments must constantly review their function and policy settings. There are some areas that government has been right to get out of: The Commonwealth's decision to sell Qantas and the State's decision to sell BankWest are two instances. However, what people see now is the decline of their public institutions.

It was alarming to me as a political candidate to meet many people who said that they would do anything to avoid sending their children to a state government high school. I found that particularly alarming as the father of four young children, all of whom will attend state government schools. The view constantly conveyed to me was that the public education system was in decline. The same was said of the public health system and public transport system, and of virtually every other arm and function of government. The people who raised those matters with me - they were many - believed the quality of service traditionally delivered to them by the public sector in transport, hospitals, education and so on was being sacrificed for the sake of bottom line accounting. They believed that we had government by accountants. I agree with them.

Governments should ensure that our public institutions do not become the second-rate, last resort option for people who cannot afford anything better. Among the principal functions of government should be ensuring the best quality in the vital areas of public education, public health, public transport and community services. Governments must be prepared to invest money to enhance public infrastructure, both physical and social - and by that I mean human. Failure to do so for short term savings or ideological reasons will create huge costs in the long term. National Party members should be aware that that is creating huge costs in the country areas already. We have had this debate in Western Australia before in this Parliament; I have read the *Hansard*. It is illuminating over the closure of the Fremantle to Perth railway line. I invite people to read it and discover who was right in debate on that matter.

Short-termism and the mind set of the bottom line is not conducive to good government. The Federal Government plans to slash funding for legal aid. In the short term that will no doubt produce a budget saving, but how much will it cost society in the long term? What about some of the basic principles that transcend economics - principles such as justice? The same thing is happening in a raft of other federally funded services, most despicably in the area for which I have shadow portfolio responsibility - disability services. The explanation comes in Orwellian language. We are told that it is part of a national efficiency dividend. There must be more to government than the task of programing an adding machine. Although it must be businesslike and fiscally responsible, government is far more than a mere business and politicians are far more than mere businessmen. Adam Smith recognised that principle. He recognised that there were moral, ethical and service dimensions imperative to government. His disciples seem to have overlooked that. These dimensions take more skill and more imagination than that required to read a balance sheet. A Government must protect and foster the rights, opportunities and wellbeing of its citizens. That is what we should be about.

In pursuit of this end the importance of employment cannot be overstated. History tells us that long term high unemployment brings with it massive social problems and the history of Australia teaches that lesson starkly. Governments should not simply wash their hands of employment policy and leave the resolution of high unemployment to the mythical powers of the market and the simplistic notion of working for the dole. This is an area in which government should be strongly active and State and Federal Governments should cooperate in this as a principle function.

The current Federal Government's decision to slash labour market programs was wrong. Governments should set employment targets. With the strength of the economy in Western Australia this State should aim at unemployment of no more than 4 per cent. Recognition - perhaps even statutory recognition - should be given to a legal right to work so that if people are unemployed for a period of one year, they must be offered a job, or training or education, with Governments prepared to subsidise wages if necessary for employment placement in private enterprise for a set period. A model of this was provided in Paul Keating's Working Nation program. The revenue side of the fiscal equation would become an issue, but it is not an insurmountable issue. It might be time for another national tax summit.

The legitimate role of unions should be recognised and a cooperative tripartite relationship between unions, employers and government should be pursued. Security of employment, as I have indicated, is vital. Governments - and that includes this one - should stop sacking people. Governments should indicate, through policy, support for job security and encourage business to do the same. Governments should encourage a greater sense of morality and community responsibility among business. The low paid, the unemployed and the ordinary public see business leaders, the chief executives of public companies and corporations, paying themselves millions of dollars a year while thousands of ordinary working people with families to support are sacked. The head of Western Australia's biggest public company, Wesfarmers CSBP Limited, was paid \$1.2m last year. He had taken a pay cut of \$200 000. That is more than the average worker will earn in his or her entire life. To me there is something fundamentally wrong with that.

The public sees also politicians enacting policies or demanding standards from which they themselves seem excused. The State's public schoolteachers were told for two years that they had to demonstrate a rise in professional standards and productivity gains to be eligible for a pay rise, only to see the politicians of this place accept a 9 per cent increase with no discernible change in work habits. While insecurity and uncertainty is increasingly a fact of life for many

politicians who are seen by many as responsible for creating it, they are also seen to be cocooned from its ravages. Members of Parliament who are defeated after just two terms - eight years - or who retire after three terms, or 12 years, can claim a pension of at least \$40 000, indexed for the rest of their lives. That amount is far in excess of the income most of my constituents would earn in a year of hard work. Politicians elected in their thirties can move on to other careers in their forties with lifetime indexed so-called pensions, or take massive lump sum payments, which in some cases now push upwards to \$1m. How can I justify that to my electorate? It is not hard to understand why people are so cynical about the motives of politicians.

The parliamentary superannuation scheme should be abolished and the superannuation entitlements for politicians should be brought into line with community standards by making them part of the general government employees' superannuation scheme. As a matter of justice or fairness, the accrued benefits of current members should not be affected. In other words, the current scheme would have to be phased out. I do not believe we can continue with the current arrangements because sooner or later community pressure will force change. I do not mean to cast aspersions on current or former members. The parliamentary superannuation scheme was created for a particular time. The time has changed and we must change with it.

The old justification for the generous superannuation scheme for politicians - that they had given up other careers and risked uncertain futures in a precarious occupation - is no longer acceptable. These days everyone's employment is insecure. A virtually unbreakable four-year contract would be considered long-term job security for most of the people I know. As a journalist I was employed on an annual contract throughout my career, and was reminded of it on more than one occasion.

Politicians are probably better placed than most to find other work if they should be unfortunate enough to lose their seat - certainly better placed than many of those whom they have been happily sacking. In any event, special provisions could be made for former politicians who fall on genuinely hard times. Other post-parliamentary benefits or perks should be abolished or phased out for everyone except former Premiers. Members of Parliament should be properly funded and resourced while they are serving the public rather than in later life. Measures like this may or may not go some way towards restoring the balance of credibility for those of us in political life. I have been assured by some that it will not make one iota of difference, but it should be done because it is right. I have also been told that I will think differently after I have been here for a while - which is why I thought I had better say it now so I can remind myself.

It is not healthy for our society that so many people are contemptuously dismissive of their elected representatives and cynical and disillusioned about the political process. That is one of the factors that made me decide to give up journalism, join the Labor Party and seek preselection. I believed the Labor Party in Western Australia faced the very real possibility of major electoral demolition last year. Thankfully total collapse was avoided. For people like myself, my immediate and wider family and my friends - who are broadly representative of the ordinary working people of this State - that would have been a disaster. We have traditionally relied on the Australian Labor Party to represent our interests in the wider political world.

I grew up in the old State Housing Commission area of Lockyer in Albany. The people who made up the neighbourhood were blue-collar workers, their families, migrants, Aborigines, single parent families and pensioners. It was the election of the Whitlam Government in 1972 that made available for kids of my background a whole range of opportunities that had never been available to our parents, or even to our older brothers and sisters. I owe a debt of gratitude to the Whitlam Government.

The ordinary people of the State - the people who will not be the privileged beneficiaries of the policies of economic rationalism - still need the Labor Party as the party of social democracy to represent their interests as we move into the next century. A healthy political system needs such a party.

There are many Aboriginal people in my electorate and before I conclude my speech I would like to return to an issue I raised earlier; that is, Aboriginal affairs. On 17 May last year, I stood with about 2 000 other people, mainly Aboriginal, in the cemetery at Pingelly while the body of Rob Riley was laid in the ground. It was an overwhelmingly sad time. His passing on 1 May last year was a great tragedy for this State. The story of his life and death said a lot about the story of Aboriginal people in our society. For too much of our history since colonisation official policy and energy has been aimed at minimising, even eliminating, aboriginality from this State. Thankfully, such efforts have failed, but too often the results have been tragic and too often Governments have adopted new forms of the old mind-sets. We should be grateful for the resilience of Aboriginal people and indigenous culture in the face of what has happened over the past 170 years. Instead of regarding aboriginality as a burden to carry we should see it as an asset of great potential.

We should support the reconciliation process, first, by recognising and respecting the rights of Aboriginal people; that is, through native title. The symbolic importance aside, for many Aboriginal people native title provides the

opportunity to develop an economic independence that has long been denied them. Native title does present problems for other sectors. Once again, they should not be resolved at the expense of the rights of Aboriginal people. Other countries have managed this issue; we can do it too. We are lucky in Western Australia that we have Aboriginal life, so rich in art, music, dance, storytelling, literature and drama. This is a unique vein of our culture that we should celebrate and promote internationally so that Western Australia can become known as the best place in the world to experience Aboriginal culture, both contemporary and traditional.

I have already mentioned that I grew up and went to school with Aboriginal children in Albany. However, it was not until a few years ago, when I went as a journalist to a back to Mogumber day at the old Moore River mission north of Perth, that I was surrounded by people from Albany and learned the stories of what had happened to their families under the old policies of separation and assimilation. I was disappointed to say the least that an important part of the history of my own community had been denied to me and that that history as I knew it was so incomplete and sanitised.

The history of the post-colonial experience of Aboriginal people should be taught to all students in our schools, not as some elective option chosen by two or three students. This is not a matter of guilt; it is a matter of knowledge. Through knowledge we can overcome ignorance. We should try to overcome that ignorance because it fosters misunderstanding and intolerance, and we can no longer afford that. We have seen too much of the ugly face of Australian life since that now infamous speech in Federal Parliament last year. That issue was thrown at me as a candidate and my wife and I decided to confront it. We did so and defeated it.

Many things are easier said than done, I know. However, this is one of the great areas of challenge for our Parliament and State Government, and it is one that we must continually strive to meet. Despite the fact that every effort still seems to meet with great resistance from some quarters for some reason, as a society we should understand that the cost of failure in Aboriginal affairs would be massive - it already has been. Old prejudices are hard to change and easy to encourage. Part of our role in this Parliament is to ensure justice, freedom from oppression and equality of opportunity for all people, including Aborigines. With effort and goodwill on all sides, such a thing is possible. The motto for the reconciliation movement has been "walking together". The walk will be long and difficult, but it must be undertaken. Rob Riley's own words were repeated by the priest at his grave side -

You do not stop fighting for justice simply because those around you do not like it. You keep on fighting.

Finally, I disagree with many of the policies of the present Government. That should be obvious; if I did not, I would not be on this side of Parliament. It is possible to respect, like or perhaps even to love a person with whom one disagrees politically. Through my work as a journalist, I developed a respect, friendship and fondness for many members of the opposite side of politics. I have yet to fall in love with any of them, but that might come in time - the member for Albany might be a candidate! I have learnt that quite contrary points of view and beliefs can be held with equally good intent and sincerity, and I have learnt to respect that fact.

The Speaker made the point in his acceptance speech that this Parliament will take us into the next century and millennium; like he, I find that an exciting prospect. I look forward to working with you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and all members to make the experience fruitful and enjoyable.

[Applause.]

MS WARNOCK (Perth) [12.11 pm]: I congratulate my colleague the member for Willagee for a profound and truly inspiring speech. I am renewed in my vigour as a Labor member of this Parliament hearing such words. He, along with other members such as the member for Armadale, addressed a number of issues which remind us how important it is for members of Parliament to see their responsibilities for grave social problems, such as unemployment. We should never cease to engage these problems and do our best to solve them for everyone in the community.

This is a new session of Parliament. I will save my congratulations for the Speaker for another day, but I congratulate you, Mr Deputy Speaker, on your elevation to that high and important office. I know we can depend on you for fair judgment.

As the opposition spokesperson on multicultural and ethnic affairs, I shall speak in the Address-in-Reply debate on a very important subject to me. If not for the lack of opportunity due to valedictory speeches, I would have addressed this matter in the dying hours of the last Parliament. I will discuss the Government's plans in the ethnic affairs portfolio. This is an area of particular interest for me. I will also address the question of free speech and the responsibilities of members of Parliament.

Like a great many people in this country - I see that my colleague the member for Willagee is one of them - last year I became concerned about the actual and potential damage to the social fabric of this country caused by uninformed

and unrestrained public discussion about Aborigines and migrants to this country. A civil society depends on a social contract between the people who live in that society, and that social contract involves both laws and customs.

We all agree, for example, that people should not murder other people. It is wrong; it is against the law. If somebody contravenes that law, he or she will suffer the consequences. On a philosophical level, that approach to murder prevents harm to citizens and contributes to a civil society.

Like the member for Willagee, I worked in the media for years under a series of rules and regulations - a code - which was part of the running of our civil society. I agreed under the code not to say or do certain things: I would not use blasphemy, obscenity or personal slander or incite people to violence. That was the code for people working in television and radio at the time, and I assume the rules still apply - I have no reason to believe otherwise. The reason for the rules is that such behaviour might offend the average listener or cause disorder. They are part of our civil society.

Under the former Labor State Government, a Bill was introduced to ban racially motivated abuse and vilification. The legislation arose out of the racial attacks on Asians in our community by groups called the Australian Nationalists Movement and National Action. Neither group made any secret of its racially based policies and its dislike of migrant groups and Jews. I can remember as a member of WARE - West Australians for Racial Equality - removing from bus stops offensive posters which caused great hurt to people I knew. Members of these racially biased groups went too far and made a number of violent attacks on people and their property. Some of them went to, and remain in, gaol.

While all this was taking place in our community in the late 1980s, blacks, Asians and Jewish members of the Australian community - they are Australians too - felt under threat and worried about what might happen to them. They worried about attending public meetings. I remember a distinct threat from a nasty group of people who threatened violence against people at a meeting. WARE looked for ways to curb the offensive speech, the threatening behaviour and the graffiti at bus stops; that is, the actions of those who do not care about the sensitivities of others. I am proud to still be a member of WARE.

I mention in passing that at 10.30 am this Saturday in Northbridge, in front of the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts building, a rally for multiculturalism will be held. This has been arranged by WARE, among other people.

All these people about whom I speak are Australians; they are like you, Mr Deputy Speaker, me and others in this House. Many are a different colour from me or were born overseas; some are Aboriginal and some are Asians, but they are all Australians. Most of them would subscribe to the idea of freedom of speech, but I imagine that most of them, like me, believe freedom of speech should be used responsibly. I knew as a journalist, and I know now, that there is no absolute freedom of speech. The rules for curbing absolute freedom of speech are long established and exist for good reason.

In parenthesis, I refer to the playground rhyme, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me." I chanted that rhyme as a child and did not think about those words too much. As I grew older, I realised the rhyme was hollow and disingenuous. Adults who have never been called nasty names might agree with that rhyme, but people who have been persistently and with malice called a "kike" or a "coon" would have a different view.

One aspect which disturbed and disappointed me about the debate which followed the inflammatory and uninformed speech delivered by the Queensland parliamentarian last year was that this person gave permission for every uninformed bigot in the country to abuse people they did not like - goodness knows, every one of us dislikes somebody. Also, the man who claimed to be running the country for all of us made it very clear by his long silence on the matter that many people are not included in his view of "all of us".

I mentioned at the beginning of my speech the responsibilities of members of Parliament, a matter I take very seriously. I am disappointed that our Prime Minister should have taken so long to exercise his responsibility in this area. As a member of Parliament, he must have seen and heard, as we all did, what was happening in the community, where many people were badly affected by that debate. He must have known that an open go at migrants would cause pain to people who look different from the rest of us, but have rights as citizens in this country.

Among the many critics of the Prime Minister on this issue was *The Australian Financial Review* commentator Malcolm McGregor. Immediately prior to that joint motion in the Federal Parliament presented by the Prime Minister and Hon Kim Beazley, the journalist spoke of what he saw as Howard's shameful silence. I was sad at the time to find myself agreeing because I greatly admired the Prime Minister for his immense courage on the gun control issue. I believe in giving credit where credit is due. We have a special responsibility as members of Parliament. In one sense we are seen as leaders of the community. We are elected to represent all of the people in our electorates, not just the ones who look like us, who think the same as us or follow our religions. We are here for all people. We cannot stand by and let ignorance and ill informed public utterances be made which could cause deep hurt and

offence to some individuals and potentially damage the civil society which I mentioned earlier. We cannot let such things go unchallenged and we have a responsibility to say something about it.

During the heat of the so-called debate last year - I say "so-called" because at one stage of the game it stopped being a debate and became a kind of public abuse session, judging by some of the things I heard on talk back radio - other conservatives in the community had no hesitation in speaking out. People like former Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, and the former politician Fred Chaney, had no difficulty in condemning what one of them called socially destructive ignorance. I was disappointed that the leader of our country took so long to respond. As we heard at the time from very many people who were being troubled by it and who relayed their views through the media, it not only caused hurt and pain to individuals in our community but also had the potential to damage our \$14 billion tourist industry and our huge education export industry, which is truly important to this State particularly, as well as business investment in this country.

We are not talking here about what views are fashionable or unfashionable or the freedom of speech versus an alleged veil of silence over certain topics. I would take to task many people who allege that there was a veil of silence. Having worked in talk back radio for something like 10 years, I do not recall any silence over certain issues; they were aired very vigorously. We are not simply talking about freedom of speech but a leader's moral duty to actively promote and support a civil society. That is what makes Australia a wonderful place in which to live. We support a fair go for everybody in this country and the freedom to walk around without the fear of physical or verbal abuse. We support a society which promotes tolerance of difference and not suspicion and fear of it. I have been glad to grow up in this country, but I became deeply depressed about it last year. I remind members that Australia has been a migrant country since the arrival of white settlers more than 200 years ago. The whole population certainly needs to debate whether the country needs more, fewer or the same number of migrants as we have at the moment. In recent months there have been a number of interesting debates about that. However, when debate about whether we need more or fewer migrants, how many we can support and whether they are economically useful or damaging starts disintegrating into a hail of abuse and centres on sheer blind prejudice and not facts, somebody has to step in and say something before too many people suffer. I do not see why people should suffer verbal abuse any more than physical abuse. We certainly punish people who physically abuse others, if we can apprehend them.

I am also the first to agree that we should be able to discuss quite freely how Aboriginal communities are funded. We are taxpayers and the Aboriginal portfolio uses a lot of taxpayers' money every year. My colleague, the member for Willagee, referred to history and the present day disadvantage of Aborigines with reference to the late and deeply lamented Rob Riley. When people do not seek to encourage the idea of guilt but to ignore it and claim in a torrent of abuse and clear prejudice that indigenous Australians are not disadvantaged, clearly it is time for strong leaders to accept their responsibility for these matters and to speak out. I am terribly sorry that it took so long for the Federal Government to realise that problems were developing in the so-called debate last year. I am very pleased that a joint motion was presented to Parliament. I will take pleasure very shortly in supporting a similar motion in this Parliament. I am pleased to note and will follow with interest, too, the Federal Government's declared intention to fund a campaign of education on the subject of race, immigration and indigenous Australians. It is incredibly important.

There is no doubt that the debate was damaging to our reputation as a tolerant society. There was also concern at the time, as I mentioned earlier in my speech, that tourism, our large education export industry and business investments would be damaged. Common sense and common decency is called for, as my media colleague, Phillip Adams, made clear in a very telling piece at the end of last year. We must support the fact of a multiracial society. It is not a question of asking, "Should we or shouldn't we?" We have been a multiracial society since the first white settlers arrived more than 200 years ago. To argue whether we should have a multiracial society is a nonsense; we have one. The best we can do is make it even more successful than it is at the moment. We have a very successful, new society, which is quite unlike other new world societies, such as that of the United States of America.

I read an article in *The Australian*. This week it was pleasing to note that a group of bright young citizens from throughout the country had been to something called a "constitutional convention" in Canberra. The story's heading read that the students favoured a republic and a racism free future. I was pleased to see that the young people at the convention supported not only a republic, of which I happen to be a supporter, but also that anti-racism clauses be put into the Constitution. That is a fine idea.

If I might turn briefly to the State portfolio of Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs, I am pleased to note that the new Minister has expressed strong support for a multicultural policy and is an unequivocal rejector of racist views. We share a long interest in this portfolio. I am pleased to note also that a community relations strategy with an attendant media campaign and public information and education effort is to help maintain that harmony which thankfully has largely existed in our society while I have been living here. Most groups similar to WARE, to which I referred earlier, called for an education campaign many years ago. Governments of all colours might well have moved into

the area long before now. We have been vigorously encouraging migrants to this country, certainly since the Second World War, and people arrived long before that. We took pot luck that everything would be okay when they arrived and that they would understand what they were doing and be able to make their way. Millions of them have. However, when migration increased in recent years and also when we abandoned the white Australia policy, we needed to explain the situation to people much better than we did. I support the Minister in his view that some sort of public education campaign should be undertaken. It is an extremely good idea. I believe that Australia is unique among modern nations. I have felt it for a very long time. We have been admirably pursuing a courageous multicultural policy. We have been prepared to accept more than our share of humanitarian refugees and I am glad that we have abandoned that old colonial policy of racially restricted immigration. We have done all of that without major social disharmony.

I believe we need to congratulate ourselves and be glad. This is a society that aims to give all of its people a fair go. It has a lot to gain if we do our best to retain and vigorously promote that social harmony. The Minister has my total support in that effort. I will be watching his efforts, as is the task of an Opposition. I will be glad to work with him in any direction of that kind. It is a question of working at it. I grew up with Aboriginal people. My family has been here since the 1840s and all of my family grew up with Aboriginal people in different parts of this State and Australia. I was deliberately brought up in a particular way so that I knew there were names that one did not call people who were a different colour from oneself. When I was very young I was given a book called "Lester the black lamb". It was a naive little book but it was a book of its time. The story was that Lester the black lamb, who had been cast out by the rest of the flock, became a hero when he sheltered the white lamb from the fox. That is a simple childhood story which my family gave to me. I can remember at a very early age being roundly condemned for using a word that I never used again. I used it without knowing what it meant. An adult said it in front of me and I repeated it. As I said, I was roundly condemned for using it and was told never to use it again. I have borne that in mind ever since. As that song from "South Pacific" said, "You have to be carefully taught". That meant that one must be carefully taught to be a racist. However, I believe one must be carefully taught to accept social harmony and to understand the importance of social harmony.

I am lucky to have in my electorate the wonderful Highgate Primary School. If the Minister has not already visited that school, he will have cause to do so in the near future. For more than 100 years, that school has been the school which the children of new migrants have attended. It is an inner city school and because new migrants tend to cluster in inner city areas in their first few years as migrants before they move into the rest of the community, that school has always accommodated many children of migrants. Early this century, Italian, Greek and Jewish migrants sent their children to this school. I saw many of them at the hundredth anniversary of the school a couple of years ago. They all remembered their wonderful days at the Highgate school. As well as the Australian born children who attend the school, there are also little children from Africa, Asia, South America and eastern Europe. Many of them are the children of refugees and the children of migrants. I have to give a pat on the back to the admirable staff at this school; it is one of the happiest schools that I attend as a member of Parliament. I attend it regularly because of the very nice feeling it has about it. The staff at the school work very hard at achieving racial harmony. The school is a revelation to anyone who goes to it.

Difference is often frightening. It is an easy scapegoat when things are hard and we feel insecure about the future. As my colleagues, the members for Willagee and Armadale have said, we feel insecure about things like employment, and quite rightly. Many people are unemployed at the moment and many more are likely to be unemployed before we solve the extraordinarily difficult problems that exist in our community. However, as parliamentarians, we must support a civil society by encouraging tolerance and by working diligently to solve those serious problems such as unemployment. Sometimes it seems extraordinarily difficult to deal with; however, it is our obligation as members of Parliament to deal with it. We must accept that responsibility and do our best to work at resolving the problem.

Finally, it has been my pleasure to have had the opportunity at last to address this subject as I intended to do at the end of last year. I support my colleague the Minister who seems to be extremely interested and concerned to promote similar things to those that I seek to promote. I shall be watching, listening and learning from what he presents to the Parliament in this important portfolio.

Amendment to Motion

Ms WARNOCK: I move -

That the following words be added to the motion -

but we regret to advise Your Excellency that the misdirected approach of the Government to the heroin crisis on our streets is contributing to the preventable deaths of too many Western Australians.

Accordingly, we urge the acceptance and the implementation of the following plan -

- (1) Establish a joint parliamentary inquiry into heroin related deaths with expert independent backup to report to the Parliament on necessary measures to deal with heroin use.
- (2) Urgently provide funding for sufficient detoxification units and methadone programs, including in prisons, to eliminate the unacceptable current waiting lists.
- (3) Engage in an extensive public debate about practical solutions to prevent drug related deaths rather than simplistic political rhetoric.
- (4) Vest exclusive responsibility for the heroin issue in the Minister for Health rather than fragmenting responsibility between the Minister for Health and the Minister for Family and Children's Services resulting in an unacceptable dilution of service provision.
- (5) Accept the need for a practical, live saving, emphasis in heroin policy rather than simply pretending there is no significant problem.

MR McGINTY (Fremantle) [12.37 pm]: Over the past 18 months in Western Australia an estimated 150 to 160 Western Australians have died from heroin overdoses. The most recent figures that are officially available are the 1995 figures from the Task Force on Drug Abuse Bulletin dated December 1996. It states that 65 deaths were caused by heroin overdoses in Western Australia during 1995. Since then there has been a significant increase in the number of deaths caused by overdoses. I am told that before 1995 the number of heroin overdose deaths in Western Australia ranged from between five and 15 a year. In that short space of time there has been an escalation in the number of Western Australian citizens dying from heroin overdose. Much of this evidence is anecdotal and I will come to the reason for that in a minute. Recent newspapers have carried headlines such as "Drug death sparks father's questions", "House of death deals a heavy toll", "Addicts fall to strong doses", "Heroin theory in pub death", "New heroin deaths fear", "Deadly heroin toll rises to 14", "Diners see drug death", and so on. We almost expect to see those sorts of headlines in the newspaper when we wake up each morning. That is an unacceptable situation and something about which the Government needs to take stronger action than it has undertaken to date.

The thing that has really brought the issue home to many people is the overdosing of three prisoners in maximum security prisons last weekend, which resulted in one of the three dying. The drug issue calls for strong action by this Government, particularly in the context of heroin overdoses being both health and life saving issues rather than a political issue which can be dealt with in glossy publications and through heavy political rhetoric.

The people to whom I have spoken in the last few days on this issue told me that each of the heroin deaths which occurred in Western Australia was preventable. The 150 to 160 Western Australian people who have died over the last 18 months could be alive today had the right policies been in place. Before I move off the question of statistics on heroin deaths, I indicated at the outset that an estimate only of the number of people who have died is available. The experts to whom I have spoken gave me the figure of between 150 and 160 who have died from heroin overdoses in the last 18 months. In any event the rate of death from heroin overdoses in Western Australia is rapidly escalating.

Statistics on death by heroin overdose used to be available in the same way as are statistics on the number of people who die in motor vehicle accidents or from various forms of cancer. However, if one were to try to obtain from the Health Department or any of its agencies information on the number of people who have died from heroin overdoses in Western Australia recently, one will not get it.

Mr Prince: The Alcohol and Drug Authority has released the figures.

Mr McGINTY: It has not. How many people have died in the past 12 months?

Mr Prince: In 1996 there were five in January, four in February, two in March, two in April, three in May, four in June - a total of 20. It is approximately one a week.

Mr McGINTY: That information is not available to the public. I have tried to obtain it from the Alcohol and Drug Authority and I was informed that it was not available. The problem is that the most recent figures which are available are those which were published in the Drug Abuse Task Force Bulletin of December last year which gave the figures for 1995. There is now an element of secrecy associated with the incidence of heroin deaths in Western Australia. I ask the Minister to provide me with the figures for January and February this year or November and December last year.

The reason there is an element of secrecy surrounding these issues is that it is a major embarrassment for one reason; that is, the Minister's Drug Abuse Task Force basically said heroin was not a problem in this State and that the incidence of heroin use was static. To simply achieve a particular political outcome, the real focus of the task force

was on cannabis. It was not done to deal with the real issue which is killing Western Australians in an increasing number on a more than one a week basis.

Mr Prince: The figures come from the Chemistry Centre and coroner's office.

Mr McGINTY: I challenge the Minister to phone the ADA and ask how many people in Western Australia died from heroin overdoses in the last 12 months. It will not be able to tell him. I have tried and I have not been given the answer because it does not know. Its work has been syphoned off into the Drug Abuse Task Force. Secrecy on these matters is unacceptable. The extent of the problem in Western Australia must be exposed and not brushed aside as though it is a problem that affects only a small, seedy element of the community. It affects a growing proportion of the Western Australian population.

From my reading of it and in the opinion of the experts to whom I have spoken, the report of the Drug Abuse Task Force was a whitewash to conceal the real problems associated with drug abuse in this State. It was designed for the political masters to achieve a political outcome. It said that the heroin problem in Western Australia was significant and that it certainly was not an increasing problem. That is wrong. It said the real problem is cannabis. People can have their own views on that but to deny the existence of a major life taking problem through heroin use in Western Australia is hiding one's head in the sand. The report said that the ADA, the agency which, with minimal resources, is doing an excellent job in its fight to save the lives of citizens of this State who have the misfortune to have a heroin addiction or are intravenous drug injectors, should be abolished and have its functions scattered throughout the community. The report placed an enormous emphasis on policing which is fine for the addict, but it will not save the life of a single addict.

It also placed emphasis on education and referred to what is known as rational harm reduction. In other words the "say no to drugs" campaign. People should be discouraged from engaging in drug abuse. I am sure the Minister for Health will agree with me that when the "say no to sex" campaign was launched to combat the HIV virus it did not work. There must be a pragmatic response and we must deal with the practical issues that arise. For as long as people are told to simply "say no" and that will be the end of the problem, we will be burying our heads in the sand and pretending there is not a drug problem in the community and we will not save the lives of the people whose lives are threatened by the inadequacy of government action.

From my reading of the drug task force report it did not say anything about the use of drugs in prisons. If we need an example of that, members should recall what occurred last weekend when three prisoners overdosed on heroin and one died. Prisons are known to be places where drugs are freely available. On one piece of research, 20 per cent of prisoners who were tested for drug use through urrine samples were positive at the time of the testing. Another study showed a remarkably similar figure which was that 20 per cent of prisoners self-reported having been heroin users prior to going into prison.

Recently we have seen figures for the incidence of hepatitis C in the State's prisons. It is at worse than epidemic proportions. It comes from intravenous drug use and the sharing of needles which is taking place in the prisons. Where are the recommendations from the drug task force in relation to combatting this incubator? It is one of the most concentrated areas in which drugs are abused, yet we turn a blind eye to it. There is no methadone program in the State's prisons. It is prohibited as part of the prison regime unless one is HIV positive. If a person goes into prison with a heroin addiction, he is expected to go cold turkey. We show surprise when we hear that drugs have been smuggled into prisons and an incident occurs like the one last weekend. We need appropriate treatment programs in our prisons where unfortunately drugs are rife. Research indicates a large number of prisoners inject illicit drugs, share the needles, catch hepatitis C and run the risk of dying from overdoses. We need to introduce the methadone program into Western Australian prisons to give prisoners the capacity to get off their heroin addictions while in prison. The Government's approach to that issue is to bury its head in the sand. It does not want to admit people in prisons take drugs. The fact is they do, and it is time we were realistic about this issue.

Those are some of the shortcomings of the Drug Abuse Task Force. If we needed further illustration that the Government's drug policy, which emanates from that task force, is misdirected, yesterday's report from the National Centre for Research into the Prevention of Drug Abuse should lead everyone to worry about the Government's failure to prevent Western Australian citizens from dying of heroin overdoses. It is apparent from that report that the profile of persons who inject illicit drugs in Western Australia is that of the ordinary person in the street. As far as I am aware, this was one of the few studies, if not the only study, which used people who buy syringes from chemist shops as the sample group for heroin use.

Mr Prince: Do you accept that a significant number of people do not buy fit packs from chemists but use needle exchanges, so that survey has a relatively narrow base?

Mr McGINTY: I accept that, but that study does throw a completely new light on both the problem that is facing this State and the policy responses of the Health Minister. The demographics were well reported in this morning's paper. Forty per cent of the people who inject heroin in Western Australia are women. That is quite different from the result of previous research. The average age of those people is 26, many are in full time employment and earn a reasonable wage, many are in stable relationships, and many have children. That is very different from the seedy depiction that we sometimes see in the Government's propaganda of alienated fringe dwellers who are shooting up heroin. We bump into people like these every day of the week. The most disturbing figure that came out of this report is that 40 per cent of these ordinary people in the street share their needles, thereby passing on hepatitis C and HIV.

My plea to the Parliament is that we take our heads out of the sand and stop trying to pretend that all the Government need do in our prisons, schools and the community is have a policy of total abstinence and educate people to say no and the problem will go away, because it will not. Our policy must change to one where we seek to save the lives of Western Australian citizens who have the misfortune to have this medical problem. The longer the Government refuses to wake up to the reality of the problem that confronts it, the more lives will be wasted that could have been spared.

A joint parliamentary inquiry should be established to replace the drugs task force that was set up by the Premier to provide political advice to the Government of the day on how to appear to be addressing this problem. That is quite different from the Pennington report in Victoria, which was independent and engaged in significant community debate, which we have not had in Western Australia. Political knee-jerk reactions associated with the election have been taken to this difficult issue. We must place emphasis on saving the lives of the people who have this medical condition rather than on scoring political points or adopting the high moral ground that if these people want to kill themselves, good riddance to them because they are people whom society does not need. That is not an acceptable response, but it is the Government's response.

Mr Prince: That is nonsense.

Mr McGINTY: I ask the Minister for Health and the Minister for Family and Children's Services sitting next to him: Who is responsible for heroin issues in Western Australia? The Government has fragmented it between those two Ministers. The Minister for Family and Children's Services is responsible for the drug task force and through that to the Premier. The Minister for Health is a lame duck Minister because he does not have responsibility for preventing these people from dying. The Government has fragmented that responsibility and thereby diluted its focus on this issue. It is fundamentally a health issue.

Mr Prince: Come on! It goes across government.

Mr McGINTY: It is an addiction, and if the Government denies it is a health issue, it will not be able to deal with this real problem that is killing an unacceptable number of citizens of this State. We must have an extensive public debate, not political knee-jerk reactions where people try to deal with issues other than the real ones that are killing people. This amendment to the Address-in-Reply is designed to get the Government to focus on the inadequacy of its response.

What are either of the two Ministers responsible for heroin, if I can put it that way, doing to stop people in Western Australia dying from heroin use? I am aware of only one initiative, and I am prepared to give credit for that: The training of general practitioners to go into the community and extend the methadone program. However, it is unacceptable that the Government currently has a 12 month waiting list for the methadone program. A heroin addict who went to the Alcohol and Drug Authority today to get onto the methadone program would be told, "Wait until next November. We will then slot you in for an appointment to assess you for entry into the program." Any Government that is keen to get its citizens off addictive drugs must face the reality that the drug is being used and abused and is costing an unacceptable number of lives. Most of the people with an addiction will die while they are waiting to get onto that program. In the general hospital area, waiting lists are used as a yardstick for measuring the success of the health system. The waiting list for the detoxification unit is such that people risk dying before they can get into that unit.

I commend this amendment to the House.

Debate adjourned until a later stage of the sitting, on motion by Mr Cowan (Deputy Premier).

[Continued on next page.]

Sitting suspended from 12.58 to 2.00 pm

[Questions without notice taken.]

STATEMENT - SPEAKER*Question on Notice - Withdrawal*

THE SPEAKER(Mr Strickland): I advise members that the member for Nollamara has requested that question on notice 198 be withdrawn from the Notice Paper. No clear rule on this matter is on the record of the House, but having considered practices elsewhere, it is plain that, until a question is answered, any member may have his or her question withdrawn from the Notice Paper. As the member for Nollamara did on this occasion, I ask members seeking the withdrawal of a question to provide a brief written note to the Clerk to that effect. Following that procedure, the withdrawal will be effective immediately with the Clerk of the House advising the responsible Minister as soon as possible. An appropriate note will appear in the Votes and Proceedings indicating that the question has been withdrawn.

Also, I remind members that it is a courtesy for new members to make maiden speeches without interjection. We have seen a couple of minor variations on that tradition, so I remind members of that point.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY*Amendment to Motion*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

DR EDWARDS (Maylands) [2.34 pm]: We are on the verge of a very serious drug problem in this State, and we are not currently equipped to adequately meet this problem. It is an extremely serious problem with increasing numbers of people dying from heroin overdoses. We need a bipartisan approach to this issue, and the spirit of this amendment to the Address-in-Reply motion today suggests a joint parliamentary inquiry be established, and calls for us to express our belief that more funding is needed in this area, particularly for detoxification. We must enhance public debate on this problem and shift responsibility for the matter to the Minister for Health. Also, we must truly explore some practical measures to tackle the problem.

It would be fair to say that government policy in this area draws heavily from the Government's Task Force on Drug Abuse report which was released in September 1995. That report was based on information which is likely to have been erroneous. As a result of that false information, we have been lulled into a sense of security which has been misleading.

The report indicated that the use of opiates, predominantly heroin, has remained steady, with little change in usage and little change expected in the future from usage in the 1970s. The report drew on the fact that in the years considered, criminal charges were pretty constant at between 100 to 200 offences per annum. Also, it referred to the number of calls to the alcohol and drug information service telephone line being constant during the years the report considered.

The report also commented that, although the number of people joining the methadone program had increased, the new admissions remained at 20 per cent of the total clients accessing the program. The message throughout the task force report was that heroin was not really a problem. It considered that some usage occurred in the community, but that the usage level was very low.

It also said that mortality from heroin was low at around 28 deaths per annum; in fact, it indicated that a drop in the number of deaths had occurred. To some extent one cannot argue with that finding because the number of deaths 15 years prior to the inquiry was much higher. If one extrapolated those figures, yes, the number of deaths was low. However, that situation has not been maintained. In the last year the heroin death rate has escalated to figures which nobody quite knows. Certainly, it is a matter of concern. The report said that less than 2 per cent of individuals report ever having used the drug, and it gave the picture of the typical user as a male in his late 20s, who, at around age 30 years, if he survives, will stop using the drug. The report released yesterday shows that our stereotypes of heroin users are not correct. I was amazed by the number of women with children who are reported to be heroin users.

The other comment in the task force report which has been overlooked relates to heroin usage in prisons. The task force pointed out that nearly 20 per cent of prisoners report previous heroin use, yet less than 2 per cent of prisoners are in prison on heroin-related offences. That is one area in which the task force did not follow through on the accurate information provided to it.

It seems strange that in spring 1995, when the report was released, it was going against the trend of other information coming out in the same year. For example, early in 1995 a large international conference was held in Tasmania on drug harm reduction. Much media attention was given to that conference, and a dire warning from the meeting was the flood of heroin that was about to hit Australia. The conference indicated that Asian markets were no longer

sending heroin to America, particularly North America, as other suppliers had taken over that market, and Australia was identified as the easy place into which to bring heroin. Strong warnings were given about an increased supply of heroin in Australia.

The other warning made at the 1995 conference was that the purity of the heroin was increasing. Therefore, the purity of the heroin to hit our streets would increase as well. Early in 1995 dire warnings about heroin were given at an international conference, yet they were not heeded in the task force report released six months later. That is very sad.

I concur with the comments of the member for Fremantle that to a large extent the task force report was a political document. It came out with the answers which its political masters wanted to hear. Although a lot of consultation took place, one must wonder about the conclusions reached. We know that the number of deaths from heroin overdose jumped to 65 in 1995. That was double the predicted worst figure of around 30 a year. Authorities who work in this area have said in the last few days it is likely that between 150 and 160 overdose deaths have occurred in the last 18 months.

Mr Prince: One a week on average.

Dr EDWARDS: We need to look at the period over which that is averaged. I would not be surprised if the figure has increased since the end of last year. There were many very graphic media reports at the end of last year and those reports indicated that it was more than one a week.

Mr Prince: I am told by the ADA that it is one a week.

Dr EDWARDS: That is old information.

I turn now to the annual report of the Alcohol and Drug Authority, which was tabled in Parliament yesterday. It is a good report. It indicates that a lot of work is being done at that agency. The ADA annual report points out that during the last year there has been a 15 per cent increase in the number of calls to the alcohol and drug information line. It receives over 18 000 calls per annum. The report refers to a very interesting feature; that is, calls related to amphetamine usage have decreased. The whole of Parliament should welcome that. However, there has been a 39 per cent increase in the calls related to heroin use. That is extremely serious. That reflects what is going on in the community. It also reports that the number of clients admitted for detoxification has risen by 22 per cent. Again, that is an extremely high figure. There was an 11.5 per cent increase in the number of clients treated in the methadone program. Again, that is a big increase. Interestingly, the authority reported that in all of its programs across all drug areas, there has been a significant increase in the number of clients who report that using heroin is a concern to them, and that is what they call their primary drug of choice. The ADA's conclusion, which should be obvious, is that the demand for services is increasing significantly.

One of the issues I want to highlight is the residential medical detoxification service. We are told that only 17 beds are available. If the committee was set up, this is an issue that it could explore. Those 17 beds had to cope with 873 clients. The report released yesterday indicates there is an increase in the number of women using the service and an increase in detoxification from opiates which, in this State, is mainly heroin. It says also that there was a 59 per cent increase in what went on in this centre over the admissions that it was contracted to deal with by the Health Department. I ask the Minister to consider that seriously and reassure us that that service is getting enough funding to do its job. If the contract is so out of sync with what is happening, the problem is serious.

The figures indicate also that there was a 35 per cent increase in what is called occasions of service and a 16 per cent increase in their assessments. Therefore, all the indications from the 1996 annual report of the Alcohol and Drug Authority are that heroin is a problem and that the problem is increasing. There is an indication also that when the services are much higher than the level at which the contract was set, the service may not have enough funding to do what it is supposed to do.

I was alarmed to read on 27 February in a report in *The West Australian* of the coroner's inquiry into the death of a heroin addict that Dr Allan Quigley, the Acting Principal Medical Officer of the Alcohol and Drug Authority, is quoted as saying 950 addicts were on the methadone program and up to a thousand others needed it. He also confirmed what is known in the community; that is, there is a six to nine month waiting list. He pointed out, however, that the ADA sees only 10 to 20 per cent of people who really have problems in this area. The William Street clinic currently has 400 clients daily; that figure goes up to 500 on weekends. Therefore, many people are using the methadone program. However, if that is compared with the waiting list, the waiting time, and what is going on in South Australia, there are indications of how we can improve the service in Western Australia. South Australia has radically altered its methadone treatment program. It is encouraging, as we are, general practitioners to prescribe methadone and it has given GPs extra training in that area. However, South Australia has also increased by 85 per

cent the uptake of people into the methadone program. It now has 1 600 people on that program. Given South Australia's population and our population size and other demographics, our figure of 950 is too low.

I have been told by people involved in the program that in the same period that WA had 42 deaths from heroin overdoses, South Australia had only nine. As well as cutting down significantly on the number of deaths from heroin overdoses, South Australia has also decreased the number of people requiring detoxification. I know from my electorate that when people who want to get into the treatment centres and get on the methadone program are faced with the current waiting times - even with only three or four days for the initial assessment - they do not turn up. A constituent last year who got to the point of wanting to get onto methadone and changing his lifestyle could not get an early enough appointment to save him. I am a former medical practitioner and have contacts. I was able to activate the contacts and get things done. However, he did not persist. His family were extremely upset that every time they contacted services to get help, their needs were not adequately met. I had close contact with that family. However, that person disappeared and is back with his drug habit.

At the same time that South Australia has changed its program, it has noticed a decrease in the number of deaths from overdoses. Interestingly, whether it is closely linked or not, there has also been a decrease in property crime. South Australia argues that the average heroin user is costing the community approximately \$20 000 a month.

Mr Prince: I am told the same thing for New South Wales.

Dr EDWARDS: It argues that if addicts can be put on the methadone program, the people who need between \$250 and \$400 a day to service their habits will not commit crimes. That makes sense because anyone who needs that much money a day will resort to crime by breaking into homes, stealing videos and selling them on the black market. If that cycle can be broken, we will see a drop in property crime.

South Australia has also considered its management of heroin overdoses. It was noted that many people in South Australia who experienced an overdose or had a friend who had experienced one were reluctant to call an ambulance. They believed the police were monitoring the ambulance calls. That is probably a realistic expectation for 000 calls. Therefore, in South Australia, the people involved, including the police, have cooperated by urging people to use the word "unconscious" when they ring for an ambulance because a person has overdosed. Addicts can be reassured to some extent that, if they need to call the ambulance service because of an overdose, the police will not arrive.

Another big debate that is going on in South Australia is whether ambulance officers should be able to administer the drug that reverses the effects of a heroin overdose - a drug called narkan. My view is they probably should not because I have seen the drug used. When it is used, the person who is nearly dead from the heroin overdose - he or she may have stopped breathing - wakes up very angry and usually in a lot of pain. Essentially, the drug reverses all the nice effects that one gets from the endorphins in the heroin - heroin is just two molecules of morphine - and I am told it is like being kicked in the face. These are the sorts of issues they are able to discuss in South Australia and these are the sorts of issues we would discuss with the public debate we are proposing as part of this amendment to the Address-in-Reply.

I make this point about preventable deaths in prisons: The prison population comprises people who have used and do use intravenous drugs. A report in *The Medical Journal of Australia* of 3 February states that 35 to 44 per cent of New South Wales prison inmates occasionally inject illegal drugs and about one-third of the adult males who enter prison have hepatitis B and C. Therefore, because inmates are injecting illegal drugs and sharing needles, people who do not have hepatitis B or C before they go into prison will have it when they came out.

We have a crisis with preventable deaths from heroin overdoses, and we must do more than we are doing currently. It is not enough to say we will prohibit drugs and tell everyone that they are illegal. I am not even sure that message is getting through. Given that 40 per cent of the people who use needles in this State are sharing needles, certainly the health parts of the message are not getting through. We must accept that we have a problem and need realistic solutions. I urge all members to give serious consideration to supporting this amendment and setting up a joint parliamentary inquiry into this extremely serious issue.

MS ANWYL (Kalgoorlie) [2.51 pm]: I support the amendment and the argument put very ably by two of my colleagues that this is a health debate and not, as has been the tendency in the past, a law and order debate.

The Sydney Morning Herald of Monday, 10 March reported that the New South Wales Director of Public Prosecutions, Mr Nicholas Cowdery, QC, has stepped up his campaign to make drugs readily available to addicts. This debate is raging particularly in the Eastern States given the Australian Capital Territory's drug trial proposal, which the New South Wales Commissioner of Police stated a fortnight ago had his support. The report stated that the New South Wales DPP described as a futile exercise Australia's attempts to keep imported hard drugs from its shores and said that to spend money on the law and order approach was throwing good money after bad. He said also that he advocated liberalising the drug laws to make drugs available to addicts and treating the use of drugs as a

health problem rather than a law and order problem. I do not necessarily support making drugs available, but I use those comments to illustrate the need to look more realistically at the use of drugs, which is increasing, as the member for Maylands said so succinctly.

It is time to take a different approach to the drug problem. I studied "Drugs and the Law" at university some 15 to 18 years ago and at that time the emphasis was on drug education. The emphasis appears to be still on drug education. I am not saying that drug education does not play a role in this debate, but the combination of the drug education model and the law and order model is not working. Young people are continuing not only to experiment with drugs but also to become addicted to those drugs.

While I encourage the Minister for Health to assume the principal responsibility for the heroin debate, the statistics indicate that it is predominantly the youth of this State who have heroin addictions. I am pleased to note that this month the members of the Youth Council were announced. Advertisements for those positions were placed a year ago in March 1996, and now in March 1997 that council has been appointed.

The 1995 drug task force report uses 1994 statistics and indicates that roughly 4 per cent of high school students either had used or were using amphetamines and a further 3 per cent had used or were using heroin. There may be some overlap in those figures. It is very clear that use of heroin is increasing as opposed to use of other drugs. I suggest that if those statistics were updated, the use of drugs among those high school students would be much higher. There is also a low incidence of self-reporting in such studies.

One aspect of heroin use which is perhaps overlooked is the potential to use heroin to commit suicide. We tend to focus on the high grade heroin which comes onto the streets and increases the number of deaths, but there may also be the deliberate use of heroin to achieve a particular end. From time to time the media portrays drug use in popular culture, particularly in the music industry. Much of that debate is probably a bit unfair to the musicians involved.

Mr Prince: That is because you do not like the music!

Ms ANWYL: I frequently do like the music; that is why I am attempting to protect the musicians involved. If we accept that there is an increasing preference for heroin, it is also worth looking at a wider indicator of intravenous drug use, which is the needle and syringe figures. Heroin use is not just a metropolitan or inner city problem. The figures suggest that Kalgoorlie, which is in my electorate, and Boulder, which is in the member for Eyre's electorate, lead the State in intravenous drug use. A significant proportion of that must relate to heroin alone. The 1995 drug task force report indicates that during 1994 approximately 77 000 needles were provided to the 35 000 people who live in Kalgoorlie-Boulder. Geraldton is next on the list but has less than half the frequency of use.

The drug task force report notes that sales of needles from chemist shops are extremely high in affluent rural towns where there is low unemployment. The more affluent country towns appear to have the greatest problem.

Mr Prince: Like Kalgoorlie.

Ms ANWYL: Indeed. Kalgoorlie clearly has the biggest problem if we rely on those figures. Geraldton and Mandurah, and even some of the inner city suburbs that one thinks would be the worst, pale into insignificance when compared with Kalgoorlie-Boulder.

Mr Prince: High disposable income.

Ms ANWYL: That is one factor. Another important factor in Kalgoorlie-Boulder is that the number of young people is way above the state average. It is clearly a youth issue. There is anecdotal evidence in Kalgoorlie-Boulder of a link between drug use and the transient nature of the population. Members of the health profession have drawn to my attention that many of the young people are engaged in prostitution and the so-called skimpy barmaid trade and there is some link between heroin use and those occupations. It is cyclical. One could argue that that sort of work engenders drug abuse, or that people are doing that work because it is highly paid and the workers already have a heroin addiction. No detoxification or rehabilitation unit exists in Kalgoorlie-Boulder. I am a member of the Goldfields Drug Action Group, and we have identified that aspect as a target to set up ongoing support for addicts. In a way, we are blessed to have some general practitioners who have firmly embraced the need to provide ongoing support and methadone programs.

The second point is that extreme problems have been faced by people wishing to get onto a methadone program who have not been able to access the patient assisted travel scheme. The methadone program requires that a person undergo significant assessment, and one must travel to Perth repeatedly to do that. Although some moves have been made to solve the problem, for country people generally it is vital that the PAT scheme work to enable people to access the service. I do not have time to discuss the other programs associated with people moving to the methadone program, although that aspect has been mentioned by previous speakers.

Heroin addiction is principally a youth issue, and there is the health aspect of it. It is young people who are predominantly affected by the problem.

Mr Prince: I am delighted that you have contradicted the member for Fremantle.

Ms ANWYL: I do not think I have. He said that health is the primary focus, but he did not say that it should be the only focus.

Mr Prince: In respect of young people.

Ms ANWYL: I did not understand him to say it was an elderly person's problem.

Ms MacTiernan: He said that the stereotypes were often wrong.

Mrs Parker: He spoke as though the sample discussed in the report yesterday was representative across the board. He was making generalisations, whereas the sample being used today was the people who were buying syringes from pharmacists, and we know that many drug users and a great range of other people do not have a supply of syringes from that source. It is dangerous to draw comments from the report and apply them across the board. The member for Kalgoorlie is making a far more balanced commentary on the issue.

The SPEAKER: Order! Perhaps the member for Kalgoorlie would like to continue.

Ms ANWYL: I would. I do not know if I have misinterpreted the comments by the member for Fremantle. I did not understand him to say that one could apply a broad picture to the drug addict. However, it does affect people across the board.

Dr Edwards interjected.

Ms ANWYL: We have all agreed that stereotyping is wrong, and we will be talking at cross purposes if we continue in that vein.

The demographics suggest it is a youth problem above any other group in society. We probably agree on that point also.

Mr Prince: That is what the task force said.

Ms ANWYL: I was about to look at what the task force said on this issue as it relates to youth. At page 122 the report comments on appropriate mechanisms for intervening with youth drug use. The report makes a point which is extremely valuable in the emotional debate which is generally generated by any talk of provision of drugs or the relaxation of drug laws, or even a focus away from the law and order perspective which is very necessary in this debate. The report states that intervention must recognise that some young people will experiment with drugs. That is a fact of life. Therefore, there is a need to stop society from becoming hysterical at the thought of some drug use, because there will always be some.

Mr Prince: We should always try to minimise it.

Ms ANWYL: Absolutely, but not if that minimisation takes the form of putting our heads in the sand and ignoring any other -

Mr Prince: Exactly!

Ms ANWYL: I suggest that is what politicians on both sides can easily do because of fear of an electoral backlash on this issue which generally generates an emotional debate.

The report states that we must recognise some young people believe that risks have no consequence; that intervention must recognise that drug taking is normal adolescent behaviour. It states also that some young people believe that there is no risk, and that they have limited attention spans and different concepts of time from adults. Obviously that is associated with health risk taking behaviour, because there is no concept of the ramifications of drug use. There is also the lack of community responsibility.

The other telling report is a Victorian study by a Mr Brown in 1991. It talks about drug treatment in Victoria and states that it is pointless to talk about drug use being the sole target of intervention. It refers to the need to address issues such as homelessness, limited social recreational opportunities, unemployment, and many others. However, it is a nonsense to talk about drug use on its own and ignore the other factors.

Mr Prince: It is not just a health issue.

Ms ANWYL: The primary focus needs to be the health aspect. It is not just a health issue. I do not think the member for Fremantle was saying that it was just a health issue. However, we must get away from the law and order focus because as long we stick on that point we will not solve the problem.

Dr Edwards: People do not call an ambulance because of this.

Mr Prince: I realise that.

Ms ANWYL: One need only look at the recent report of the Institute of Child Health calling for greater agency cooperation. We must take our heads out of the sand and address the need for change. That is the point made by the New South Wales Director of Public Prosecutions. He says that commonsense tells us that if we are doing something that is not working we should have a good hard look and see if something different might be done that might work. He says that if a sensible approach to the problem is adopted, the middle man will disappear, drugs will be sold at a price which can be afforded by those who remain addicted, and many of the law and order issues will disappear; the issue will remain a health problem which is what it should have been in the first place. The New South Wales DPP would not be a man noted for his radical views.

Mr Pental: Do you say that is what the amendment is advocating?

Ms ANWYL: No. It is not advocating that. It says that we need to have a joint parliamentary inquiry; we need to provide increased funding for the health aspects - that is, detoxification and methadone -

Mr Pental: I know what it says. I am happy to support it. I am not happy to support the sentiment expressed in New South Wales.

Ms ANWYL: I do not support that. I simply say that when the New South Wales DPP urges the Parliament in that State to take a fresh approach to the issue, surely it indicates the seriousness of the problem and the need for a fresh approach by Parliament. I do not endorse his views. I simply use them as an illustration of the need for change in the way Parliament approaches the issue.

Mrs Parker: When you referred to the DPP in New South Wales you did not necessarily agree with his position. There is a bit of ambivalence there.

Ms ANWYL: I do not have an answer to the problem. I would like to peruse the results if the Australian Capital Territory goes ahead. The Minister has hit the nail on the head. How can we stick our heads in the sand and say that we will rule out any change in the way that heroin addiction is dealt with, such as methadone programs? We cannot do that. We do not have the expertise to do it. We need to reassess our approach to a very serious social problem. I urge members on both sides of the House to take a bipartisan approach to the issue. Let us look at the political reality: The coalition Government is in office for four years, assuming the Premier does not decide on an early election. We have plenty of time to take a bipartisan approach on such matters. I simply echo the comments of previous speakers regarding the need for a reassessment of the entire rehabilitative -

Mr Shave interjected.

Ms ANWYL: I ask the Minister to let me know when he has finished.

The SPEAKER: I advise the member for Kalgoorlie that if she sits down, she has finished her speech; however, I ask her to continue.

Ms ANWYL: Mr Speaker, I ask that you ensure some order so that I may proceed with my speech, given that I have only two minutes remaining. I have tolerated the interjections for quite a few minutes, and I think that is sufficient. We need to look at the rehabilitative process in much greater detail and embrace a health model for this issue. There is quite a deal of psychiatric interface in terms of the number of addicts with these problems. This issue needs to be addressed much more completely than it has been. The law and order aspect will be hugely decreased if we can find some effective solutions to the level of drug addiction because the justice ramifications, to which I have referred when quoting the Director of Public Prosecutions of New South Wales, will affect almost everybody in the State.

MS MacTIERNAN (Armadale) [3.11 pm]: This amendment affords a very real opportunity for the Government. There is no doubt that dealing with the issue of drug use in our community is particularly politically challenging, and I cannot say that all virtue has lain with this side of the House on this matter. Because we have had at least 70 years, if not 100, of rhetoric concerning the drug war, we have created a great deal of hysteria and an atmosphere within the community in which these issues cannot be debated rationally.

Mr Prince: If you go to the goldfields, you will find it was much more than 70 years.

Ms MacTIERNAN: In terms of a legislative response, it is probably about 100 years, when the anti-Chinese sentiment manifested itself in some drug laws. If we read those early debates, we will find that the members of Parliament at the time were aware that the laws would be completely ineffective, but that was not their concern: There was a political imperative to react to popular public sentiment; hence legislation was enacted.

It is a very difficult issue for us to deal with, but we must be prepared to do so because it is having enormous consequences within our community. Today we have highlighted the situation with the heroin deaths. As the members for Fremantle, Maylands and Kalgoorlie have pointed out, this situation is getting drastically worse and it is not one that we can sweep under the carpet. We are saying that we would like the Minister for Health to consider this amendment as one that has been moved with a great deal of sincerity. It will provide the Government with an opportunity to deal with this problem.

Mr Prince: Until yesterday you would not have thought of it.

Mrs Parker: Without any political opportunism at all?

Ms MacTIERNAN: I do not know where the Minister for Family and Children's Services has been hiding for the past four years, but this is not an issue that I have not raised before.

Mr Shave: You were in a different House before.

Ms MacTIERNAN: I do not know whether news stops south of the river, but this debate has gone on for some time. We are genuine in our sentiment that it will be much easier to deal with this issue if we adopt a bipartisan approach, because it is immensely difficult politically to handle it.

Mr Prince: You come along with us and you will be fine.

Ms MacTIERNAN: We are saying why not go along on this together; set up a bipartisan committee that can look at all the arguments and make a determination.

Mr Shave: And not be political.

Ms MacTIERNAN: I can assure members that we on this side of the House are more than prepared to do this because this is a political problem for both sides of the House. What is very sad is the wasted opportunity that we see with this drug task force. In my view, it was not set up to address the problem; it was set up to come down with a predetermined result. That is very evident from the people who were placed on the committee. That is not new to government. Governments often construct committees to achieve a predetermined outcome. This is clearly the result in this case.

I went to a packed meeting at an inner city hotel attended by virtually every health professional engaged in drug treatment, and the condemnation of this report was scathing. There was complete dissatisfaction with the basic thrust of the report. For a start the definition of "drug abuse" undermined the credibility of the report. It is defined in the report as any illicit use of drugs; or any use likely to cause damage or risk to the user or others.

In the view of many, that set the tone that the task force would not look in any objective way at whether the current regime of laws was, in fact, the most sensible and practical. It simply defined ipso facto any use of an illicit drug as drug abuse; that is, as necessarily causing harm. From the very outset it quite clearly distinguished all other substances that had been prohibited from those, such as alcohol and tobacco, that are legally available. That is just the beginning.

The member for Maylands pointed out that this report claimed that we do not need to worry too much about heroin; that its use has been pretty static. She went on to say that this was pretty surprising, given that in 1996 there had been a major drug conference in Australia where the emerging problem of heroin was set out. I was at that conference. I want to amplify the point that was made by the member for Maylands because it is very important. Many health professionals from Western Australia were at the conference. I would be amazed if they had not transmitted this information to their various agencies and to the task force. Being armed with this information, one would have been alerted to the likelihood that we were about to see - we had already begun to see it - a vast expansion in the amount of heroin awash within our community.

The issue was raised by Professor Alfred McCoy, a professor at the University of Wisconsin in the United States. He had made his specialisation the study of the heroin trade. He had been studying it for 25 years and probably was considered to be the most learned man around on the issue of heroin supply. I will refer to a couple of comments he made. Basically his point was that following two events - the end of the Afghanistan war and the US withdrawal of finance for it and the collapse of the Soviet Union - we have seen an absolute burgeoning of heroin production. Professor McCoy points out that at the end of the US-supported Afghan war, when the Russians withdrew, some three

million Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan and took up opium growing as their basic cash crop. There was a major financial crisis in the country, and a crop that had been condoned covertly during the war between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union had the effect of encouraging locals to move into that industry. The United Nations estimates that within the space of one year, from 1994 to 1995, production increased from 900 tonnes to 3 200 tonnes. That is, in that country alone there was a doubling of the world's supply of heroin. That is only part of the picture. The increase in heroin deaths around Australia is not an accident; it is definitely related to this massive expansion in supply.

That material was known to the health professionals in this State at the time this task force document was prepared - a document which purported to map the way forward for the State. The document was wrong and completely missed the boat on heroin use. It is reprehensible that, given the information was well-known among health professionals dealing with this matter, a task force report could adopt the approach that there was nothing happening in relation to heroin; that it was business as usual and, therefore, it would not focus on the matter. It would not say that every indication was that there would be a massive expansion in the amount of heroin coming into this country, and, hence, it must give attention to the expansion of the methadone program. Although an increase in the amount of heroin has occurred over the past 18 months, there has not been an appropriate reaction. There has been no expansion in the methadone program. There is no preparedness to look at the situation in the prisons, which in many ways are becoming a breeding ground for the use of opiates.

The fundamental point I make is that this material is devastating. The information that is available about the massive expansion of opium production across central Asia means that if we rely fundamentally on policies that attempt to control supply, we will be abdicating any responsibility. We must focus on policies that deal with demand.

We talk about drug education. However, absurd slogans such as "Mugs do Drugs" are used, and the extraordinarily naive view is taken that that pseudo-funky phraseology will somehow capture the imagination of young people. Young people are not stupid. We must do more than adopt a few phrases from their jargon.

Mrs Parker: Do you disagree with those sorts of public education programs?

Ms MacTIERNAN: They are of limited effectiveness because young people take the view that we are being extraordinarily hypocritical when we talk about drugs. Many of them - not all of them - take the view that we are happy to sit around drinking champagne and smoking cigarettes while telling them that what they are doing is wrong. What we describe as education, they see as propaganda.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. The Government has been spending more and more money on education with less and less effect. More people are taking up drugs and unless we are prepared to do something radical and to look at new solutions, we will not get anywhere. The slogan "Mugs do Drugs" will not solve any problem.

I raise again the issue of prisons, which was touched on by the members for Fremantle and Maylands. Some interesting statistics were quoted at the conference to which I referred. A particular concern was the relationship between injecting drug use and HIV-AIDS and hepatitis A, B and C. A strong theme ran through the conference that what was described as a veritable alphabet soup of hepatitis was reaching plague proportions in our community, and injecting drug use was implicated in this.

I will quote a couple of statistics to illustrate what is going on in Australian prisons. It is stated that one in every four prisoners injects drugs and almost always shares syringes. It is stated also that another common risk behaviour for blood borne virus transmission that is often overlooked is tattooing. Apparently one in six prisoners is tattooed in prison and also contracts HIV-AIDS.

Mr Prince: Didn't you know that?

Ms MacTIERNAN: I knew that tattooing occurred in prisons, but I did not know it was that common. By contrast, only one in 10 prisoners engages in sex in prisons. The provision of syringes in prisons may need to be considered along with the provision of condoms. The member for Kalgoorlie and I are not saying that this is the path that we must follow. A range of matters must be looked at objectively and rationally. A fine example exists in Australia of a positive result which has been achieved by taking what initially might have been considered to be a politically risky option, but which was successful. That was the decision by the federal Labor Party under, I think, Dr Blewett to promote and permit needle exchange programs in Australia. The result of that decision is that Australia has one of the lowest rates of HIV infection in the general community and among injecting drug users compared with other countries where needle exchanges have not been permitted. That is an important way of protecting the health of not just HIV drug users but also the broader community. The community is in contact with the injecting drug users; they are not a discrete group.

Come July, the Minister for Health will be asked again to consider whether he is prepared to support his Liberal Party colleague in the ACT, pharmacist and Chief Minister Kate Carnell, in the ACT's call to conduct a heroin trial to see whether one way of dealing with this problem for certain intractable users is to provide heroin under close medical supervision to dependent users. I am sure many members of this House, including the Minister, are aware of the trial in Switzerland, which was successful. On virtually every indicator it was shown that the position of the dependent drug user improved. The Minister must again turn his mind to this matter over the next few months. It would be in the Minister for Health's interests if he allowed members in this place to assist him to come to a conclusion so that we could reach a bipartisan position. If there were any political fallout, the Minister would have the protection of both sides of the House.

Mr Kierath: It sounds like an offer too good to refuse.

Ms MacTIERNAN: The Minister for Labour Relations has quite rightly picked on the fact that we are making an offer to this Government which we believe can only assist it and the community at large.

MR PRINCE (Albany - Minister for Health) [3.31 pm]: I oppose the amendment moved by the member for Perth. It is somewhat pleasing to see the Opposition at last getting involved in the issue of drugs in our society, the ill effects that they have and the harm that has been caused. That is a positive step. It is a pity - I refer particularly to the remarks of the member for Fremantle - that members opposite were not involved in the drug task force and its extensive community consultation all over the State and in the metropolitan area.

Ms MacTiernan: Some of us were.

Mr PRINCE: I appreciate the member may have been. It seems from the remarks of the member for Fremantle that he was not. That is unfortunate, because the task force was the first of its kind to go almost everywhere and talk to everyone and also to look at the literature and everything that was then known. The task force has been quite exhaustive in that regard. The Minister for Family and Children's Services, who has responsibility for the task force, no doubt will comment at greater length about that.

In 1994-95, this Government took the initiative to engage the task force and send it out to prepare a complete and thoroughly well researched report. It produced a significant number of recommendations, many of which have been implemented or are in the process of implementation. They are having an effect. The member for Armadale has made the point indirectly that one cannot look at drug matters in isolation and talk about heroin alone. As soon as one talks to young people about heroin, for example, they quite reasonably call one a hypocrite. As the member has said, the champagne that she might drink or the can of beer that I might drink, the cigarettes that I used to smoke but no longer do -

Ms MacTiernan interjected.

Mr PRINCE: No, I do not like champagne. Young people will say "hypocrisy". One cannot look at it simply in terms of illicit drugs. The misuse of legal drugs is a significant problem, as is the misuse of prescribed drugs, as well as those well known to us. The most prominent would be alcohol and to an extent tobacco and related products. One must look at the totality of the problem area. It involves the use and abuse of drugs, whether licit or illicit. The task force did just that. As I have said, it came up with a series of recommendations, many of which have been implemented. Some remain to be implemented, such as those dealing with the Alcohol and Drug Authority, for which I have ministerial responsibility, and they are being examined now. The Minister for Family and Children's Services and I have had a number of short conversations. We will be meeting; there will be a council; and she will refer in a moment to how we will carry on addressing the matter on a cross-government basis. The matter does not sit in any one portfolio but in a number.

Dr Edwards interjected.

Mr PRINCE: I will make an announcement about the ADA when decisions have been made. I have said that to the ADA consistently since I became Minister for Health. I do appreciate the problems of uncertainty it has been working under. I have made a point of speaking to the ADA at every opportunity which has presented itself. I am meeting representatives at 5.00 pm today to talk again about these matters. I have been to the William Street Clinic. That degree of expertise and competence, hard won over a long time, should not be broken up.

Ms MacTiernan: Hear, hear!

Mr PRINCE: That is my view and I am taking it into discussions with my ministerial colleagues. It was formed in the light of the task force report.

Ms MacTiernan interjected.

Mr PRINCE: That will not necessarily be of any great advantage, with respect. I view the deaths as great a tragedy as I am sure the member does. There has certainly been an increase. The ADA tells me there have been 84 heroin related deaths in 18 months to the middle of last year. The figures more recently are more difficult to compile because they are all subject to coronial inquiries. I have been in a coroner's court, but perhaps the member for Fremantle has not. The inquiries take time. That is doubtless the reason the figures are late coming out. There is no suggestion of anything secret here. If members had read the newspaper, they would have found that I have agreed with the ADA's publicising these matters. The ADA has run an active campaign. Press releases have gone out which have been well reported by the media, and I give the media full marks for doing that. An increasing number of people are dying from heroin overdose in this city and elsewhere in this State. That is part and parcel of the proper information that people must have. There is no secret about it at all. Any suggestion to the contrary is mischievous at best. The oversupply of available heroin worldwide and its increased purity, sources of which have been amply explained by the member for Armadale, are not peculiar to this State; it happens in almost all the western world at the moment. As the member said, in 1994 it was predictable and people were aware of it. In this State, in the area for which I have ministerial responsibility, for the last year or so we have increased the availability of methadone services through the ADA. I have looked carefully at other forms of treatment. The ACT proposed heroin trial is one proposition. It was proposed by the Chief Minister of the ACT with no backing from any Minister in Australia, nor the New South Wales police. She cannot run it in the ACT unless the New South Wales authorities cooperate.

Ms MacTiernan: The New South Wales police have supported it.

Mr PRINCE: It cannot come into being unless the New South Wales authorities cooperate to their fullest, because the ACT boundary is not one that drug takers take any notice of when they go backwards and forwards.

Ms MacTiernan: Commissioner Ryan has supported it.

Mr PRINCE: The member has had her time. They cannot do it in the ACT without the backing of New South Wales and funding from the Federal Government. None of the Health, Police or other Ministers who were part of the ministerial council on drugs which met last July would say, "We are prepared to back you financially." If the ACT wants to do it, I will not stop the Minister. I have said consistently for eight months that if the ACT wants to trial giving heroin to known registered addicts, that is fine. I will be very interested to see the results. The ACT does not need my support, imprimatur, or permission. It certainly will not have any of my funding.

The methadone program is used throughout most of the western world. It is used well in some places and perhaps not so well in others. In this State it has been remarkably successful, leading to a significant number of people ultimately getting off the narcotic in one way or another. Of course some people have been on methadone for 15 to 20 years and are likely to be for the rest of their lives. That is particular to them.

Mr Riebeling: Do you think it addresses the problem of country people being able to continue the methadone program?

Mr PRINCE: I am more than happy to look at that. It is being looked into by the department. I will come to it in a moment. It was raised by the member for Kalgoorlie. We have increased the amount of money to ADA and as a result it has been able to increase the number of people it can deal with through methadone services. The number of clients was about 850 and is now about 950. I am told that by the end of June methadone will be accessible by about 1 500 clients in this State. Part of the process is not only increasing the capacity of the Alcohol and Drug Authority to deal with this issue, but also getting the methadone program out into the suburbs through general practitioners. The evidence from New South Wales is that with GPs administering the methadone program in the outer suburban areas and country areas there has been a significant increase in its success rate. The result has been a decrease in drug related crime, and that is certainly a desirable consequence. More people are moving through the program. Methadone, like heroin, is a narcotic, but it is administered in a controlled surrounding in a controlled program which encourages but does not demand that people reach the stage of detoxifying themselves. Members know that is the only way that can effectively happen.

I support the methadone program because it works not only in this State but also in other States; for example, New South Wales and South Australia.

Ms MacTiernan interjected.

Mr PRINCE: Of course I am. Part of the problem in increasing the number of people who can go on the methadone program at the William Street Clinic and elsewhere has been in recruiting and training the staff needed to run the program. It is a simple fact of life that the people are not available to distribute methadone overnight. Therefore, the number of users of the service has not increased. A very small market of trained staff is available. Staff must be trained and training takes time. The first group of GPs started their training last week and the second group will start after Easter. At the same time, more people are being recruited to run the ADA programs. If it could have been

done instantly it would have been, because the money was available. We have had to take the time to find people to train. We have much better information resources which target the user population. In addition, there has been a good deal more peer education in the user population, which is highly desirable, and I am sure it will lead to some controls.

I mention in passing that there are some differences in the available figures. Some of the task force figures refer to opiates across the board while the ADA figures relate only to heroin. Therefore, there may be differences in the figures relating to deaths which are otherwise inexplicable. Information on overdose and heroin use has been disseminated to the population.

I have in my hand a fitpack. These packs have been modified recently and now include information dealing with overdose. A postcard is issued with these units as they are purchased from pharmacies and it contains information about overdose. Other methods have been put in place to disseminate information to users. A survey of the clients of the William Street Clinic shows that they are very keen to receive that sort of information and are open to training on how to respond to overdoses. Training in cardiac pulmonary resuscitation and other forms of resuscitation is now available. The user population is concerned about this issue. In an overdose situation, what can be done immediately will have a critical effect on the survival of the individual. The member for Maylands will know that better than I. Things like that have an incremental effect, but it is almost impossible to measure it. It is the people who are not dying that are the result, and we cannot measure that.

Mr McGinty: What about methadone programs in prisons?

Mr PRINCE: I am coming to that. The member will be pleased to know that the Parliamentary Secretary will be commenting on that subject.

The Minister for Police will also be speaking on this amendment. The Police Department has acted in this area and the drug squad has a special unit to investigate all heroin-related overdose deaths with a view to detecting supply. To date it has had some success and it has had no resistance from the user population to the work it has been doing. That is a significant feature. An interesting point is that there have been no registered methadone deaths in this State. In any similar population, for example New South Wales and Victoria, there have been. I would like to give a big tick to the way the methadone program in this State is run because the results show that it is being run extremely well for the benefit of the people who are on it.

Dr Edwards: Can you guarantee there will be no deaths when you outsource it?

Mr PRINCE: I cannot guarantee that. Initially, that was the result in New South Wales and this State has also learnt from its experience. New South Wales has re-engineered the way it was running the program and this State has learnt from that. I can guarantee that the doctors who will be involved in dispensing methadone will be trained as well as they possibly can be, given the current state of knowledge in Australia.

I refer to the report which was released yesterday because it is important to understand that the methodology used to collect the information was distributed with the fitpacks, which are sold through 193 community pharmacies. Two and a half thousand anonymous questionnaires were distributed and 511 were returned. Only 29 per cent of people have been in contact with a drug treatment agency, if they are to be believed. Seventy-one per cent had not been in touch with any treatment agency. It is estimated that at any one time in Perth 1 500 people are seeing some form of drug treatment agency. It is arguable that the sample from the result of the questionnaire is skewed to the more articulate end of the injecting drug user group. These people are more likely to complete and return the questionnaire. Members might assume that the others who received the questionnaire perhaps fit the stereotype profile.

Dr Edwards: You are indicating that the stereotype is -

Mr PRINCE: The use of the word "stereotype" is not correct, but there has never been any attempt to say that the people who responded to this questionnaire and who are mentioned in the report do not exist. On the contrary, the point is that they are part of the IDU spectrum, but they do not represent the totality of it. The methodology used in the questionnaire and the response to it must, of itself, have picked up only part of the group of injecting drug users. The research is extremely useful because it identifies a group of people who are not in touch with treatment agencies. I wish they were. They are much less likely to heed the warning on, for example, the fitpack of "Do not share the needle". Approximately 40 per cent of those surveyed said they had shared a needle in the past month. The rate of sharing among the group which is the subject of this report is much higher than in previous studies of IDUs in treatment.

Dr Edwards: Your argument indicates that the sharing in the other population must be even greater.

Mr PRINCE: No, it is less. The survey shows that it is less than 40 per cent.

The Parliamentary Secretary will refer to the use of drugs in prisons. It has been said that if a methadone program is introduced into a prison, there will be all sorts of results. I will quote from a paper titled, "A brief history of research into the NSW Prison Methadone Program" by Mr Simon Eyland, who is the chief research officer for the medical council. The paper states -

The first study was a profile of inmates who had been assessed for the pilot pre-release methadone program. This study of 129 inmates found the typical profile of the person applying for the program was single, 26 years old, with poor employment and education histories, had a history of five or more drug offences and three or more non-drug offences who had been drug dependent for more than five years and was usually drug involved by the age of 14.

This research is contradictory to the results that came out yesterday in the fitpack study. Both are part of the spectrum and do not represent the totality. It is interesting that the summary of this report says about the methadone program in New South Wales prisons -

Unfortunately, the results so far do not indicate much success in terms of breaking the cycle of criminal activity associated with drug use. Those on the prison methadone program have not exhibited recidivism rates significantly different to those not on the program.

It does not mean that it should not be introduced; I am making the point that the methadone program in New South Wales gaols has done nothing for the recidivism rates.

Ms MacTiernan: We are talking about what happens while prisoners are in gaol. Are they not injecting?

Dr Edwards: They are.

Mr PRINCE: Very briefly, the people involved in the central drug unit residential detoxification service have managed to increase its services for heroin clients by more than 24 per cent. The 24-hour helpline increased its responses to calls about heroin by 39 per cent in 1995-96 and continues to respond to the increasing number of calls. For example, in the first seven months of this financial year a total of 1 465 calls were received, compared with last year's annual total of 1 637.

Mr McGinty: The number of people dying is increasing all the time.

Mr PRINCE: I acknowledge that it is increasing. Ongoing warnings were provided through the media to the Western Australian community about heroin overdoses as a result of increased purity and availability of heroin. Money has been poured into the existing services. The argument is that there is not enough at the moment. I accept that but what has been done is slow to show any results because people cannot combine the services. A number of other measures have been taken, and they do not undermine the task force. The strategy is in place and it is working.

MRS van de KLASHORST (Swan Hills - Parliamentary Secretary) [3.51 pm]: I oppose the amendment to the motion. I have listened to the contributions from the Opposition and they demonstrate that members opposite are not knowledgeable about prison programs currently in operation. My task is to inform them of what has been, and is being, done in prisons today. There are arguments within the profession that the methadone program does not work within the prison system. I am advised in the briefing notes I have just received that methadone is also addictive, and some people get hooked on methadone and cannot be cured of that addiction. In other words, they could be changing one addiction for another, which does no-one any good.

Dr Edwards: Do you not believe in the methadone program?

Mrs van de KLASHORST: I am speaking only about the prison population.

Dr Edwards: The whole point is to replace one addiction with another which is more manageable.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: Within the prison system people have opportunities to get off drugs altogether.

Dr Edwards: By methadone?

Mrs van de KLASHORST: No. We must make prisoners and everybody else in the community aware that within the prison system people have an opportunity to get off drugs. A number of programs are in place.

Mr McGinty: They do not sound very successful.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: I am sincere in saying that people have that opportunity. People on the outside who are taking drugs may have friends and family members who also take drugs and it is difficult for them too quit the habit. Within the prison community 6 per cent of prisoners have tested positive for opiates and 1 per cent for amphetamines.

That 7 per cent of the prison population are offered programs to help them cure their problem. It is a wonderful opportunity to control the problem.

Mr McGinty: The percentage is higher.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: Those are the figures. Within the prison system programs are being set up whereby any drug addict will have the opportunity to cure himself or herself. They do not have the outside peer pressure of others around them taking drugs. The situation can be controlled. I spoke to a woman at Bandyup Women's Prison last year who is working towards moving off drugs. She said that when she was on the outside there was no opportunity for her to do so because of the influence from her circle of friends.

The prison system has two ways of handling this matter by behavioural modification. The first is the stick or punishment method of setting mandatory penalties, and the second is the carrot method. These two methods must work side by side in order to modify behaviour, and drug taking is a behavioural problem. It becomes a psychological problem after years of taking drugs. In the punishment method the emphasis is on detection and deterrence. The prison strategy for deterrence is to penalise prisoners if they test positive for drugs. Visitors who are found in possession of drugs are penalised by not being allowed to visit the prison. They are kept from the prison system for a while and other penalties are imposed.

Mr McGinty: It is not working because there are huge problems.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: Some of these methods are working at the moment. There is a threefold detection strategy. It begins with intelligence gathering and an attempt to case manage each prisoner. When prisoners come into the system their past history is taken into consideration and, if appropriate, they are offered a chance to go through some of the rehabilitation courses.

Mr McGinty: You were warned last December and three prisoners died last weekend. You have done nothing.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: The Government is doing everything it can, although much more can be done of course. Prisoners cannot be helped unless they want to be helped. If they do not want to take part in the programs, they cannot be helped.

Mr McGinty interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I know most members are happy to take the odd interjection, but a couple of members are abusing that privilege. I ask members to allow the member on her feet a fair chance to make her speech.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: When prisoners arrive at the prison, intelligence gathering takes place and an analysis is made of the prisoner's history and how that person arrived in prison. Some people arrive at Bandyup under the influence of drugs and carry drugs within their body. Those people are set aside until the drugs have gone through their system. They are then offered the opportunity to join a drug rehabilitation program. The prison initiated information is kept at one prison and circulated to other prisons to which the prisoner may be moved. An assessment is made of their risk level and the extent to which they may be a danger to themselves and others. Active surveillance is carried out on high risk prisoners. Surveillance is focused also on visitors. If a prisoner is considered to be at high risk during a visit, prison wardens are in the room at the time of such visits. There is video camera surveillance of the perimeters of the prison to prevent drugs being brought into the prison and prison officers keep a close watch on prisoners at risk. Random searches are made of prison cells and grounds to enable the guards to identify those who are at risk and must be watched. Drug detection dogs also work in the prisons. Overseas research indicates that this is an effective method of detecting drugs in prison, and certainly those at risk should not have access to drugs. Random sampling is carried out of all prisoners. I understand 5 per cent of the entire prison population is sampled each month, and this gives the prison officers some idea of those who need help. They can identify those who are managing to obtain drugs and then keep them under surveillance. The result of these tests is to utilise their behaviour positively within the prison system. Individual prisoners would be identified and approached to help them change their behaviour to get off the drugs.

The substance abuse resource unit was set up to implement an overall program for all prisons, and to ensure that the content of each program is tailored to suit the needs of individual prisoners, depending upon the prison location and its physical surrounds. The highest risk prisoners are counselled and asked to attend these programs. The most emphasis is placed on, and precedence given to, those most at risk. A first for Western Australia is an intensive substance abuse program. It provides a regime of initial individual counselling. The prisoners work towards a rehabilitation program. There are also 10 group sessions. Where possible the components are designed for individual prisoners. The program concludes with bibliographic and homework-type activities and individual counselling sessions.

A different approach is taken with the women at Bandyup Women's Prison; they receive individual counselling. I spoke to a woman last year who told me how she had benefited from those sessions. Bandyup has 13 courses, and last year 222 women participated. The program is non-mandatory, so the participants are highly motivated.

A recent initiative from the Premier's Task Force on Drug Abuse is the second tier intervention program. That has helped 330 people. Non-government agency workers are funded to go to the prisons to deliver lower level programs to prisoners who are not necessarily on opiates, but some other drug. I do not have information on the funds expended on this program. However, considerable funds and five FTEs have been provided by the Premier's task force to work through the second tier program for those people who are considered a low risk to themselves and to other prisoners than are other addicts.

Regional prisons are also being serviced by non-government providers through subprograms which are contracted out and delivered to the prison. In the prison system only 6 per cent of prisoners have tested positive for opiates, and 1 per cent for amphetamines.

Ms MacTiernan: When was that done?

Mrs van de KLASHORST: Recently, I do not know the exact date.

Ms MacTiernan: Could we get those figures?

Mrs van de KLASHORST: Yes, I will get them and see the member for Armadale afterwards.

The prison system must also look after the 94 per cent of prisoners who do not fall within those categories. It has been suggested that every prison visitor should be searched so they do not bring drugs into prison. However, we must provide a balance for those 94 per cent of prisoners. Prison often destroys relationships and families; it upsets family balance. To strip and cavity search every visitor in the prison system would add to the trauma of having a partner or family member in the prison system. This is not an option that the Government would consider, simply because it is not equitable for all those prisoners who are not taking drugs.

Ms MacTiernan: Also, member for Swan Hills, you cannot focus on addiction; you must reduce demand not just try to reduce supply.

Mrs van de KLASHORST: Exactly. The prison system is a good opportunity for addicts to dry out. Heroin is not freely available to prisoners and programs are available to them. While they are in prison they can focus on those programs. They have the opportunity to receive continual assistance from the prison system, and the social aspect of other people trying to get off drugs at the same time is helpful.

Ms MacTiernan: You have not answered the crucial question. If the methadone program is a good program for people on the outside, why is it not offered on the inside? The same physiology applies. Why not offer it as an option? What is the difference?

Mrs van de KLASHORST: The difference is that within the prison system the opportunity exists to change people's behaviour. We should offer the best method, not the second best. If it does not work, they can get on the methadone program when they are released from prison. The prison system provides an opportunity to change behaviour. We do not want to offer the prisoners another crutch in the form of methadone, when we can offer them something better. If the program does not work, it can be re-evaluated. The prisoners can experience the ethos of working together, and have the opportunity of assistance that is available in a controlled environment to work through their problems and help them. In an ideal world we would not have anyone on drugs. However, if we can provide a window of opportunity to one prisoner, we should do so, rather than replace one addictive behaviour with another.

The Minister for Justice has stated that the Government will not introduce the methadone program in the prisons. Members must bear in mind that pregnant women, HIV prisoners and short term prisoners already on the methadone program who come in, perhaps overnight, are given methadone. Those people cannot be rehabilitated because of their circumstances. We must encourage prisoners to be drug free. We use a carrot so they want to be subjected to more stringent self behaviour. Bandyup is a good example of this. Women can go into self care units if they work towards getting off drugs, breaking their habit and turning around behaviour. That is another positive move. We cannot change their behaviour; they must do that themselves. However, we can provide them with the opportunity. The resolution of the ongoing problem of drugs in prison is constantly changing. We try one thing and then another to see what will work.

Ms MacTiernan: Why don't you try methadone?

Mrs van de KLASHORST: Programs must be re-evaluated by the new Ministry of Justice committee. If they work, they will be expanded so we can move on. This gives us a terrific opportunity to help prisoners in a controlled environment and we would be remiss as a Government if we did not do that.

MR BROWN (Bassendean) [4.08 pm]: I was not going to speak until I heard some of the drivel from the Government about the prison system. I want to tell members a few things about the system and this program and why it should be introduced. First, I want to place on the record the Parliamentary Secretary's views - she would not answer my interjection. Is the member aware of the number of attempted suicides and overdoses in the prison system in the past three weeks?

Mrs van de Klashorst: I do not have that information.

Mr BROWN: She has no idea. What are we paying parliamentary secretaries for? They should have some knowledge of those issues, but this is only the Parliament! She does not have a clue. She comes in here piously talking about methadone and drugs and does not have a clue about the size of this problem. How much is the State paying her as a Parliamentary Secretary? It is a waste of money.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The number of interjections coming from both sides of the House is intolerable. I can hear what the member is saying; he has a very loud voice, but it does not justify members interjecting unduly.

Mr BROWN: Thank you for your assistance, Mr Deputy Speaker, I am indebted to you. One must speak loudly because when some facts are revealed in this place a few members on the other side become a bit nervous because they do not like hearing them.

Mr Prince: You have not said anything yet.

Mr BROWN: If I have not said anything a lot of people on the Minister's side are upset about nothing!

Mr Prince: Say something of substance.

Mr BROWN: Does the Minister for Health, who spoke on this debate and who is a bit of an authority on drugs in prisons, know how many overdoses have occurred in prisons in the past three weeks? He does not have a clue. Is there any intelligence among members opposite? Does anyone on the government side know this information? I will bet the answer is no. Members opposite tell us there is no problem, but they do not know the facts. When we ask for facts and figures as to the degree of the problem and about what is actually happening on the ground today, members opposite cannot tell us. They do not know the answers to those questions.

Mr Pandal: Do you know the answer?

Mr BROWN: There have been five.

Mr Prince: Where do you get your information?

Mr BROWN: My information comes from various sources in the same manner as the Minister's information. If he thinks I will disclose my sources of information he must think I wear my pants back to front.

Mr Prince: Are you satisfied it is accurate information?

Mr BROWN: I am relatively satisfied that the information is accurate. I invite the Minister, the Parliamentary Secretary or any other member to check my information and advise the position.

Mr Prince: Are you referring to five overdoses that have led to deaths?

Mr BROWN: If there were five deaths we would know about them. There is a difference between deaths and overdoses; the member knows that because he is the Minister for Health. The other thing he should know, as the Parliamentary Secretary said, is that we can manage this in the prisons. Do members opposite know the integral requirement for managing a maximum security prison? Prisons must have surplus space and the ability to move prisoners around. There must be vacant cells and vacant areas. Do members know what capacity is in use in Casuarina prison today? It is 100 per cent. The capacity of Canning Vale today is 100 per cent. Where is the capacity to manage? This is not tricky criminologist material; it is basic year 1 text book reading. What has happened to the Government's planning to ensure that the prison system is capable of dealing with its current musters and drug problems?

In the past three years members have been told repeatedly in this place that the Ministry of Justice was appalling, was a mistake from day one and its planning was abysmal. Where will the Government accommodate the people who are being sentenced to longer terms of imprisonment?

Mr Day: This is nothing to do with the debate.

Mr BROWN: The member for Swan Hills said that the issue of drugs in prisons was a management issue; that we can manage it. I am picking up that point. The Minister for Police should tell me how it will be managed in a system bursting at the seams.

Mr Day: That is for another debate.

Mr BROWN: It is easy to slide onto other subjects when members opposite do not know the answers. They should tell us about the staff numbers in institutions and how many are available for detection work. They should tell us about the Government's decision to offer redundancy packages to reduce staff numbers and the necessity to recruit people immediately afterwards because staff numbers have fallen below the critical point. I am interested in these management questions which are now being raised.

We have been raising these questions over the past three or four years, but members opposite have had their hands over their ears. Even this week the Premier had to come in with his tail between his legs and table the report from Mr Allanson. What did Mr Allanson say in that very detailed report? Have any members opposite read it? Probably none of them has read it. Mr Allanson said that all the allegations made by the then Attorney General - who created headlines and spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on inquiries and charging and suspending people - about cost overruns at Casuarina Prison were wrong.

Mr Bloffwitch: He said he could not find anything, not that they were wrong.

Mr BROWN: The member for Geraldton should read the whole report. He will find that it indicates that the allegations were wrong. I raise these questions because it is being said in this debate that we can manage the drug problem in the prison system. The Ministry of Justice has not managed anything too well during the past three or four years. The Premier sacked the former Attorney General and the Director General of the Ministry of Justice was sacked also. A few other people in the Ministry of Justice were sacked but the Government continually fails to recognise the problem.

The problem is the concept of the Ministry of Justice. It has never worked properly; it has had problems and inquiries. Let us look at its planning. The prisons are full and we have passed in this State the "three strikes and you are in" law. I am not quite sure where all those people who commit three crimes will go.

Mr Bloffwitch: They will go to gaol.

Mr BROWN: They must be going to build a prison in the electorate of the member for Geraldton!

Ms MacTiernan: Perhaps we could put the prisoners on ships as they used to do in Britain.

Mr BROWN: We may have to. Rather than the pious excuse that we can manage this and solve the problem, the first thing we must do is fix up the Ministry of Justice. The second thing is to provide some proper projections of prisoner numbers and the best locations to build new institutions. The number of prisoners will increase, or do members opposite believe in their hearts that the penalties introduced under the Sentencing Act, the Police Act and the Criminal Code will reduce crime? Unless the Parliamentary Secretary actually believes that, and she does not -

Mr Prince interjected.

Mr BROWN: I am glad the Minister for Health -

Mr Prince: I did not say that: I said the population is growing anyway.

Mr BROWN: So, even if we have the same level of crime, more people will be imprisoned. Western Australia has one of the highest rates of population growth and the highest rate of imprisonment per head of population in Australia. There has been no change in that formula in recent years; that is, it has not gone in the opposite direction despite many reports, inquiries and recommendations.

Mr Bloffwitch: We are locking up fewer people than we were. Many offences no longer attract a gaol term.

Mr BROWN: Many offences are no longer subject to a gaol term. Many years ago drunkenness was an offence. That is an ongoing process as time goes by and as Governments come and go; they review social behaviour and determine that there are other ways of dealing with offenders. Many programs have been put in place to avoid people being incarcerated. Despite all of those changes, the prison population increases and the number of people gaoled per 100 000 in Western Australia remains the same or does not decline a great deal.

Given the current state of the prison system we should examine every situation thoroughly. The system is bursting at the seams and for the Government to say that it can be managed and leave it at that is wrong. If members opposite

wish to ignore the situation, or try to claim that this overcrowded system can be managed, and if they are not prepared to take a thorough look at this, the Government must bear the consequences. Over the next two or three years, even with the best endeavours, we will face some very serious consequences. Members opposite should think carefully about this issue.

Mrs van de Klashorst: Are you saying that we should put people in prison and forget them; that we should not run any programs?

Mr BROWN: Did I say that?

Mrs van de Klashorst: That is what I understood you to say.

Mr BROWN: I must speak in Arabic. I do not recall ever saying that.

Mr McGinty: I did not hear you say that.

Mr BROWN: I do not recall those words. That is creative interpretation. It is like saying that I like red roses and then take cow's pooh home to my wife! I cannot follow the logic. I have been talking about management, the difficulties of overcrowding and staffing. The Parliamentary Secretary assisting the Minister for Justice then says that I do not support prison programs.

Mrs van de Klashorst interjected.

Mr BROWN: I have not mentioned many things because they are not on the agenda.

Mrs van de Klashorst interjected.

Mr BROWN: I am speaking to the amendment to the motion. I am responding to what the Parliamentary Secretary said. She said that the Government need not consider this issue because it can be handled as a management problem.

Mrs van de Klashorst: I said it is being managed at the moment on an ongoing basis.

Mr BROWN: I agree; we are at one on that issue. I am pointing out for the Parliamentary Secretary's edification - because she has not been fully briefed by the ministry - that they are inherent problems. She should inquire into those problems and go into the issue very deeply. She should not be led astray like the previous Minister assisting the Minister for Justice, who is now sitting further back on the benches. I am giving the Parliamentary Secretary some friendly, free advice from this side of the House because I like her and I would not like to see her to make the same mistake that her colleague made. That member is shifting further and further back on the government benches. Members on this side of the House want to see the Parliamentary Secretary advance in this House - not go into reverse. Unfortunately her colleague accepted all the information given to him, but it was very unreliable information.

Mr Prince interjected.

Mr BROWN: Ministers should not simply accept the information they are given.

Mr Prince: I know that.

Mr BROWN: The Minister for Health knows that, but some of his colleagues do not. Some of them made the dreadful "Yes, Minister" mistake. They said, "Where is the answer? Let me sign it and get it into the Parliament." They were all too trusting and they were not doing their job properly, which is to scrutinise questions and answers and satisfy themselves that they are correct. I would not like to see the Parliamentary Secretary follow the same path that others who have picked up this poisoned chalice have taken. Everyone who has picked it up has not been in that position for very long. The Parliamentary Secretary should be well briefed and provide the information to this place.

Let us fix the system, split the Ministry of Justice and establish some workable departments. This issue is too important to play around with any longer. If the Ministry of Justice were sitting an exam, it would have failed. In fact, it would be making its third attempt at the exam. If it failed again, it would be kicked out. It has failed many times; it is on its last legs. It should go, but it is not going yet.

The Parliamentary Secretary should examine the issue carefully. She should look at what is currently happening in the system. I seriously suggest that the Ministry of Justice has major management, muster, overcrowding and staffing problems. If they are not resolved in the short term, the State will be the poorer.

MR MacLEAN (Wanneroo) [4.28 pm]: I oppose the amendment. To refresh the House after 20 minutes of rambling, I will read the parts of the amendment to which I object most strongly. Paragraph (1) states -

Establish a joint parliamentary inquiry into heroin related deaths with expert independent backup to report to the Parliament on necessary measures to deal with heroin use.

However, that appears to contradict paragraph (3), which states -

Engage in an extensive public debate about practical solutions to prevent drug related deaths rather than simplistic political rhetoric.

We cannot have a parliamentary inquiry reporting back to Parliament without simplistic political rhetoric.

The problems of drug addiction and the related effects are not being served by this amendment. The standard of the debate about drug addiction has been exemplary. Dr Edwards -

The ACTING SPEAKER: The member must refer to the member by her electorate.

Mr MacLEAN: The member for Maylands knows her subject very well.

Mr McGinty: We will take it as a general comment!

Mr MacLEAN: It is a general comment. The problem of drug addiction is not new, as indicated by the Minister for Health. The problem with opiates goes back in Australian history to Chinese miners. Opiates have always been a problem.

The amendment does not serve the purposes to which the debate has been directed. The debate has been an excellent account of how we could, operating as a joint committee, overcome the probable causes of the drug problem.

Ms MacTiernan: That is what we spoke on.

Mr MacLEAN: That is not what the amendment says.

Ms MacTiernan: It refers to establishing a joint inquiry.

Mr MacLEAN: The amendment is probably the biggest waste of recycled paper ever released; it has numerous problems.

Many views are expressed on this subject. We have heard today about the reliance on the methadone treatment for curing heroin addiction, but giving people methadone is simply like saying to alcoholics that they cannot drink beer, but they can drink scotch! It is the most ridiculous program ever because methadone is a soft option, but a soft option cannot apply with heroin. Soft options apply to people who cannot stand to see a heroin addict go cold turkey as he kicks and screams in pain on the floor. An addict going cold turkey is the most pathetic sight in the world, and that is why the soft option is taken to give addicts other drugs. It is a waste of time and does not work. Instead of being addicted to heroin, people become addicted to methadone. One of the big problems with synthetic drugs and chemicals is that a reformed alcoholic can have alcohol in his house, but a reformed drug addict cannot have drugs in his house.

Ms MacTiernan: Do you think the Government should disband the methadone program? Is that what you are saying?

Mr MacLEAN: No; as the methadone program is now an acceptable practice - although I do not agree with it - it would be wrong to do away with it. More efforts need to be made to get people off methadone as well. People becoming addicted to methadone and staying on the program for years defeats the purpose of the scheme.

The gaol system is an opportunity, if managed properly, to make people go cold turkey. We must have the courage to say to these people, "There are no substitutes." We need backup and cooperation from the staff and other inmates so other drugs do not enter the prisons. The problem we had on the weekend would not have occurred if we had the close cooperation which is evident in some institutions around the world, other than Australia and other industrialised countries.

Ms MacTiernan: Do you think that the prison officers are acting in that way? Is that what you are saying?

Mr MacLEAN: No. In many cases it is the girlfriend or the partner, under some misconception, who smuggles the drugs into prisons.

Ms MacTiernan: How do you stop that?

Mr MacLEAN: That is where we need the cooperation of other people.

Ms MacTiernan: Which people?

Mr MacLEAN: Can I get on with my speech?

Ms MacTiernan: I am exploring your ideas; they are fascinating.

Mr MacLEAN: I know the member is fascinated with me; that is why she came down here from the other House! I apologise, Mr Deputy Speaker.

The Australian Capital Territory heroin trials have been highlighted as something innovative in this House and other places; however, they have been tried before. I remember a program was conducted in London where the Boot's pharmacy in The Strand was able to supply heroin to card-carrying addicts. The addicts would receive their government prescribed heroin shot, leave the chemist and sell it to buy a cheaper cut from the street or buy other drugs. The longer they remained card-carrying addicts, the longer they were supplied with government-subsidised heroin, and the longer they survived on other drugs.

Unless the ACT can put in place more constraints than the London borough applied in its program, it will be an abject failure. One of the big problems is that such programs rely on people who may not necessarily want to give up a habit with which they feel comfortable as it gives them a nice feeling. It may be destroying and killing them, but they may not want to give up the drug. If someone does not want to give up an addiction, they will not do so.

I challenge those members in the Chamber who partake of nicotine or like the odd drink to give up the cigarettes, sherry or after dinner mints and see how they survive. In my case, the challenge would be to give up cappuccino because I need my caffeine fix as it makes me feel good. I would not enjoy going through life without my caffeine fix, so why would I give it up? If it were an illegal substance - as at least one church group believes it should be - what would I do? I would go underground in Northbridge and drink coffee under the table. I do not want to give up coffee, and the same sentiment applies to heroin addicts. If people do not want to give up, they will not do so.

Ms MacTiernan: Your whole approach is to make people go cold turkey. Your whole approach is illogical. Why not give them methadone? You say we should force people to go cold turkey. It is absurd. As you are trying to make them go cold turkey, they will get the drugs you are unable to stop in prisons and kill themselves.

Mr MacLEAN: That is true and untrue at the same time - it is one of those arguments. If addicts want to give up drugs, they should be given every opportunity to do so. Prison provides a perfect opportunity for addicts to give up drugs.

Ms MacTiernan: What if they do not want to give up?

Mr MacLEAN: They should not be given substitutes. They are put in prison as a punishment for being antisocial. The same applies to the heroin addict who is out of prison: If he or she wants to give up the drug without going cold turkey, the methadone program is available. As long as the methadone program is controlled so the addicts do not become addicted to, and reliant upon, methadone so the addiction carries on for years, I do not have a problem with the methadone program. However, the best way to get rid of an addiction is to go cold turkey, and this should be encouraged not only in the prison system but also within the general public.

The Buddhist monks in Thailand have an excellent program for heroin addiction. It is not open to everyone as addicts must express a desire to be on the program and sign an agreement to do so and this is enforced. They go through a very hard time when cold turkey. The Buddhist monks do not take any rubbish about people who are cold turkey not being able to work. If a person does not work in the monastery, he or she is not fed. The cold turkey addict still must plough the field. Undeniably, it is painful for them.

Ms MacTiernan: Can you not see the contradiction? That is based on people making a commitment to give up drugs. They must sign documents.

Mr MacLEAN: Absolutely. People want to give up drugs, but as soon as it becomes hard they no longer want to do so.

Ms MacTiernan: That is right, and they go in and they get illegal heroin.

Mr MacLEAN: Therefore, when they indicate in prison that they want to give up heroin, they should be removed from the general population and helped. That is the opportunity we have in the prison system.

Ms MacTiernan interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I suggest that the member for Wanneroo direct his comments to the Chair. He may then invite fewer interjections. The member for Armadale has been interjecting more than anyone today. I ask her to desist.

Mr MacLEAN: As I said, the monastery in Thailand has been very successful. It requires the two things that everyone desires. People have to want to give up heroin and it has people who are dedicated to helping them give

up heroin. It also has people who want to die or go away. The monks do not let them die. They are very successful. They treat their patients harshly, which is what we fail to do sometimes. We are too aligned these days to the soft options. We are too prepared to feel sorry for someone who has an addiction and give them another drug so that they become addicted to that drug. That makes them feel good and, because they feel good, it makes us feel good because they are not screaming and yelling. If we want to cure heroin addiction, we have to do it without substituting other drugs.

I cannot support the amendment because it is a load of nonsense.

MR DAY (Darling Range - Minister for Police) [4.42 pm]: I am pleased to be able to make a few brief comments about the police perspective on this issue. The member for Kalgoorlie gave a very measured speech in which she said, amongst other things, that this is not only a law and order issue. I agree with that. The fact is that it is a whole of government issue involving health, youth and many other aspects of government policy. However, it is true also that there are significant law and order elements to the debate. It is important that the Government take effective action against those people in the community who are profiting from other people's misery and who encourage the problem in the first place. By importing drugs and distributing them in the community, they make large amounts of money. They trade off people's misery and suffering.

This Government has taken effective action to increase the resources and powers of the police in a range of areas. For example, it introduced legislation which has passed through this Parliament to enable the Western Australian Police Service to intercept telephone calls. That will commence in May this year. It is expected that those increased powers will have a significant effect on traffickers of heroin and other illicit drugs.

We propose to introduce legislation to enable the Police Service to use other surveillance devices so that they can track and record what some of these drug traffickers are up to. The police have also commenced testing the strength of heroin and other drugs that are appearing on the streets. That information is being disseminated in the community through appropriate press releases and other forms of published statements. The drug squad has been given a substantial increase in resources and has commenced a variety of operational initiatives. The Police Service has established an alcohol and drug coordination unit, which is playing an effective role and making a positive contribution towards solving the problem.

An education package entitled "The police community drug education program" has been completed. The first round of training for 96 school-based, crime prevention and operational police officers in their role as law enforcement educators has been initiated. Therefore, the police are engaged in a range of activities initiated by the Government to ensure that a coordinated approach is adopted to solve this problem.

The motion the Opposition has moved today is critical of the Government for involving two Ministers. The fact is that more than two Ministers are involved in trying to resolve this important and tragic issue. The Premier has given responsibility to the Minister for Family and Children's Services to ensure that a coordinated approach is adopted in implementing the recommendations of the drug task force. That is occurring and I commend the actions the Government has taken so far.

MRS PARKER (Ballajura - Minister for Family and Children's Services) [4.45 pm]: In opposing this amendment to the Address-in-Reply I thank all members of this Chamber who have contributed to this debate. The fact that this debate has taken a large part of the afternoon indicates what a big problem drug use and abuse is in our community. There is no argument about that. It is a tragedy of great proportions, not only in Western Australia and Australia, but also around the world. As I said, the debate today indicates the concern that exists over this issue. It is one of the most serious social issues facing our society. Its resolution is a great challenge not only for the community, but more particularly for our young people.

The Government has recognised and drawn attention to the problem. Prior to its coming to office in 1993, no comprehensive strategy was in place across agencies and portfolios for dealing with this growing problem of drug abuse. The drug task force was established in 1994 to carry out comprehensive consultation throughout this State involving those who provide services to people with drug abuse problems. It consulted also with experts and academics in the field to produce a report on the extent of the problem. People who object to the nature of the report need to understand that it was not driven by any agenda on the Government's part. It was simply a report of that consultation. A more appropriate or acceptable report to members opposite may have been the result of consulting with only one interest group.

Mr McGinty: That is a silly thing to say.

Mrs PARKER: The member for Fremantle said a lot of silly things. We were committed to consulting all interest groups in this State. Sixteen public hearings were held; over 400 submissions were made; individual consultations

took place with some 150 organisations; and the activities of 288 government and non-government agencies were surveyed. There is absolutely no doubt about the very comprehensive nature of the consultation.

It is important to defend the consultation that was carried out right across the community. I am disappointed that the attitudes that were expressed at the meetings have been criticised. In any representative democracy it is essential to respect the views of members of the community. Therefore, the recommendations drawn from the concerns raised by the community should be respected also.

Ms MacTiernan: We are talking about the conclusions of the report.

Mrs PARKER: The conclusions were drawn from a broad-based community consultation with hundreds of organisations.

Ms MacTiernan: The conclusions about the facts of heroin addiction are patently wrong.

Mrs PARKER: Members heard about heroin in the response from the Minister for Health. I want to continue. I have waited all afternoon to respond -

Mr Thomas interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Ainsworth) Order! The member for Cockburn is interjecting out of his seat.

Mrs PARKER: The Central Drug Coordination Office is responsible for ensuring that the 159 recommendations of the task force are implemented. Eighty-nine of the recommendations have been implemented or are being implemented; planning is underway for the implementation of 36 of the recommendations; 19 recommendations have been agreed to and implementation will follow; and 15 recommendations are under discussion or no action has been taken. Therefore, 144 of the recommendations have been actioned.

There has been some misunderstanding on the other side of the House and in some of today's media commentary about the roles of the task force and the central coordination office and mine as the Minister responsible.

Mr McGinty: You have got the heroin question wrong.

Mrs PARKER: I am responding to the criticisms of the task force. We have a coordinated inter-agency plan, just as we have produced for domestic violence, which has recently been adopted by the Justice Coordinating Council, where for the first time government departments and agencies will cooperate and communicate with each other so that we do not have ad hoc programs and funding. Ministers and staff will talk to each other and ensure that complementary programs are put in place.

Despite all the criticisms of the task force, the chairman of the Victorian Parliament's committee on drugs, who was in Perth recently for a committee hearing, described the report of the task force as world class.

The member for Kalgoorlie made a fine contribution to the debate and was prepared to set aside a political agenda and make genuine comment on the issue. She said that it is primarily a youth problem.

Dr Edwards: Then why doesn't the Minister for Youth have responsibility for it?

Mrs PARKER: We want an inter-agency approach across Health, Education and Police.

Dr Edwards: You said it is a youth issue, and the Minister for Youth started to walk out of the Chamber!

Mrs PARKER: Not all Ministers have commented on this issue today. The member for Kalgoorlie said that youth were the primary users, and she was prepared to step outside the boundaries of the report that was released yesterday, which related specifically to a small sample of people who purchased their syringes from pharmacies. Many people access free syringe operations or drug rehabilitation centres.

Dr Edwards: You cannot say that, because only a small proportion answered the questionnaire. You cannot comment about the people who did not respond. You are drawing some remarkable conclusions.

Mrs PARKER: No; members on the other side have drawn some remarkable conclusions. Two arguments were raised in this place today. I appreciated the contributions of the member for Maylands and the member for Kalgoorlie because they were prepared to deal with the whole spectrum of legal and illegal drugs and age groups. Much of the criticism of the task force revolves around the recommendation not to decriminalise marijuana and other drugs. The well known position of the member for Fremantle when he was Leader of the Opposition -

Dr Edwards: When was that mentioned?

Mrs PARKER: It was not mentioned today but it is fundamental to Australian Labor Party policy.

Mr McGinty: I wonder what the Minister for Youth thinks about that policy.

Mrs PARKER: I wonder what the member for Fremantle's position is now. When he was Leader of the Opposition, he had a clear policy of decriminalising marijuana, but prior to the election when the member for Victoria Park became Leader of the Opposition, the ALP went very quiet on this matter. Even today with all the commentary in the media one has to ask what is the political agenda of the people who are making comments.

Ms Anwyl: A bipartisan approach to the issue. That is what you cannot understand.

Mrs PARKER: Absolutely - one not driven by political agendas. The former Leader of the Opposition was committed to the decriminalisation of certain illicit drugs. The new leader is a bit quiet on the issue. This Government does not intend to legalise marijuana or heroin.

Mr McGinty: You have been going for 11 minutes and you have not yet got to this amendment. When will you start dealing with heroin?

Mrs PARKER: We certainly want to address the problem of drug abuse in a wide-ranging way, and heroin is one of those issues. I do not want to repeat the material that has been covered by the Minister for Health. We believe in and do not shy away from the early intervention and prevention programs in schools and in the wider community. I would be concerned if I thought the Opposition did not support that. Members opposite talked about glossy booklets. The programs that we have put in place, particularly the information booklets for parents, have been very popular and well received.

Mr McGinty: The number of people dying is soaring.

Mrs PARKER: Is this the only place in the world that has a problem? If there were magical answers, someone would -

Ms MacTiernan: That is why we are offering you the protection of a bipartisan approach.

Mrs PARKER: There is a wide-ranging list of recommendations, the great majority of which either have been implemented or are being implemented. This is a dynamic situation. The ministerial council has a working party to look at the heroin trial, and that will report back in June or July. Those matters will be considered. One has to respond continually, and that is what the drug coordination office will do. My responsibility on the task force is to ensure that government agencies - Police, Health, Education and Justice - respond to the problem of drug abuse in our community and talk to each other.

Ms MacTiernan: That is fine, but why do you oppose the idea of a parliamentary committee to investigate the issues and provide that protection?

Mrs PARKER: A task force has consulted hundreds of organisations around the State.

Ms MacTiernan: You have missed the major issue.

Mrs PARKER: The ministerial task force is looking at issues and will respond to information as it comes through. A range of activities are in place. I am satisfied that the Government is responding to the issues. I am not happy - no-one in the community is happy - that in Perth and around the world an oversupply of low grade and inexpensive heroin is affecting many people and a number of deaths have occurred. There must be a response, and the Minister for Health has outlined our response, which includes the training of general practitioners and staff to conduct programs. In other States programs have been put in place very quickly. However, the highest professional standards must be applied. A high death rate has occurred in one State because a methadone program was not carefully run. That State has had to back away. We do not want to make the same mistakes. We have made a comprehensive response. It has been planned. This is not a knee-jerk reaction. However, we can always do more. Across agencies there will be communication to ensure that occurs.

The task force has established a strategy against drug abuse. The Government is still implementing recommendations, placing a major focus on prevention and early intervention, and recognising the need for effective law enforcement to deter high level drug dealers from causing too much damage. The Health Department is dealing with the problem at the hard end. The task force has a broad spectrum approach beginning with school children and the peer group pressure they experience, through to the hard end of drug abuse that can result in the ruination of lifestyle and death. We have put in place a comprehensive strategy to deal with the problem. I repeat that we have responded. We have a task force response across agencies to deal with the problem. The amendment today is opportunistic. It has been run off page 3 of *The West Australian*; it is politically motivated. For that reason I oppose it.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (18)

Ms Anwyl
Mr Brown
Mr Carpenter
Dr Constable
Dr Edwards
Dr Gallop

Mr Grill
Mr Kobelke
Ms MacTiernan
Mr McGinty
Mr McGowan
Ms McHale

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

Noes (29)

Mr Baker
Mr Board
Mr Court
Mr Cowan
Mr Day
Mrs Edwardes
Dr Hames
Mrs Hodson-Thomas
Mrs Holmes
Mr House

Mr Johnson
Mr MacLean
Mr Marshall
Mr Masters
Mr McNee
Mr Minson
Mr Nicholls
Mr Omodei
Mr Osborne
Mrs Parker

Mr Prince
Mr Shave
Mr Sullivan
Mr Sweetman
Mr Trenorden
Dr Turnbull
Mrs van de Klashorst
Mr Wiese
Mr Bloffwitch (*Teller*)

 Pairs

Mr Graham
Mr Marlborough
Mr Riebeling

Mr Bradshaw
Mr Kierath
Mr Tubby

Amendment thus negatived.

Debate (on motion) Resumed

MR NICHOLLS (Mandurah) [5.06 pm]: I welcome the new members on both sides of this House and congratulate them on their election to Parliament. It is important that members of Parliament retain a very clear view of the reason for their election to this place. Our electorates have supported our candidacy to represent them in this place.

I also wish to congratulate the member for Rockingham for receiving an award for bravery. It is an honour of which he should be very proud. I am not aware of the circumstances leading to his bravery award. However, his appointment as a member of Parliament and his recent award for courage indicates that he is a person who leads by example. I trust that members of this place and the general community will be inspired by his actions and follow in his footsteps if they are ever placed in similar circumstances.

I also wish to comment on the recent renovations to this Chamber. I have been a member of Parliament for eight years and I have often felt embarrassed about the condition of this building when faced by visitors, because this should be the most prominent building in the State. The condition of the Chamber, particularly the roof, did not fit the status of the building. I congratulate the people involved in its renovation and the selection of the colours on the ceiling. The change has added greatly to the Chamber and it is now a very pleasant sight.

Mr Pandal interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS: I do not wish to comment. It would probably be stepping on dangerous ground to do that.

I remind the new members that we are here to represent the people of Western Australia. I trust that all members are mindful of that fact. Although we sometimes see issues in a different light, we should all aim to improve the quality of life and general wellbeing of the average person living in Western Australia.

I now turn my attention to the Governor's address. Before commenting on it, I just say that in my view we, as Western Australians, have been honoured to have a Governor such as Major General Michael Jeffery. He fulfills the symbolic role with a great deal of ceremony and stature. He has demonstrated his compassion for the people of Western Australia. We are a richer State for the fact that he is our Governor. Many people in our community overlook the arduous duty that he and his wife carry out. I want to extend my hearty thanks and those of other members in the Chamber for the role and duties he undertakes on behalf of the people of Western Australia, and the support he gives to both the Parliament and the people.

It is with great joy that I note the optimism the Governor expressed in his address regarding Western Australia's future as we move towards the next century. We have seen Moody's return this State's AAA credit rating - a major achievement. We have also seen a number of services and innovations introduced to the State over the past four years. We are experiencing a major change - revolution is probably too strong a word - in the area of technology, and the benefits that can be obtained by average Western Australians as a result of that will be immense. We need to ensure that we do not put barriers in the way and prevent that technology being used for positive and outstanding accomplishments.

As a member of Parliament and as a previous Minister I am concerned with revenue and cost sharing between the State and the Commonwealth Governments. It is absolutely imperative that changes are introduced to the way in which taxation is applied and revenue is raised and distributed to the citizens of the nation. We must return to a basis of equity and justice in fiscal policy. It creates great disdain when the Commonwealth Government continues to use financial blackmail to get its own way, simply because the Australian Constitution does not allow it to make laws or to control various aspects of our nation and activities within the States. If we are to build on our democracy, we need to return to the basis of the Federation that was created in 1901. We need to look at the responsibilities of the various tiers of government and enshrine within the Federation equity and fairness in the way in which revenues raised are distributed. We must remove this disdain and financial blackmail used by the Commonwealth Government to control the actions of the States.

A people's convention is planned to look at our Constitution, at both the federal and state levels. I hope all members of this Chamber and the community in general take a great interest in that. There is no doubt we will have differing opinions and there will be emotional and, in some cases, quite heated debate about what is right. Our Constitution, particularly the Federal Constitution, needs to be protected from changes that will bring short term gains to some parties but could put our democracy and the Federation at serious risk.

I refer to government trading enterprises. I feel strongly about the Westminster system and the accountability Ministers have to this Parliament. With the growing number of government trading enterprises and, in some cases, the distancing of those corporations from the day to day control of the Minister and this Parliament, I am concerned that, where the Minister seeks clarification or is given guidance by an enterprise only to find that guidance is not truthful, there is a limited ability for the Parliament and the Minister to take immediate action, unless that action is to sack the board or to take quite a dramatic step.

I do not raise this point to cause hardship or to insinuate the government trading enterprises are not acting in good faith; however, we need to look seriously at the responsibilities of Ministers and at the direct implications for Parliament when we allow government trading enterprises to set up independent boards and to make decisions sometimes in the total absence of the guidance and influence of government. If there is an absence of such influence, there is an absence of accountability to this Parliament. How can a Minister be held accountable to this Parliament under the Westminster system when he or she does not have direct influence over the decisions and activities of a government trading enterprise?

I also pay tribute to those who have been involved in developing our resource sector; in particular, the Minister for Resources Development and others who have been directly involved in creating incentives for companies to pursue value added projects. As a State, in the past we have relied on exporting our raw materials overseas for another country to add value to them and in some cases we have purchased the resultant manufactured product. The direction the Government has taken and the commitment that some commercial organisations have given to the value adding process in Western Australia should be applauded and encouraged at all times.

The Governor made reference to law and order issues in his speech. We have just listened to a debate about drugs and the impact of drug use and abuse in our community. We need to look for better options when dealing with law and order. There is no one solution. Too many people are re-offending. There is a growing lack of respect for self as well as for others in our community. There is growing community despair about the services and procedures that exist to deal with people who allegedly break the law. There is growing concern also about the seeming devotion to finding excuses for people who commit crimes as opposed to trying to ensure that they understand their responsibilities and accept responsibility for their actions. I want to assist in identifying some of those real options, but I like to think that collectively as a House of Parliament all members will look for options that will help to build a better community. Law and order is one of those areas in which it is all too easy to take a political line and score political points rather than find suitable answers and solutions to specific problems.

The Governor commented also about the Prime Minister's inaugural award to the Department of Family and Children's Services. That department received the award for innovations that were put in place for child protection procedures and the parenting awareness program. I am somewhat disappointed that the media outlets in Western Australia showed a total disregard for the fact that Family and Children's Services received such a prestigious award. Family and Children's Services carries out work in a difficult area. The area of child protection is a double edged

sword in many cases. I congratulate the department and all those who were actively involved in putting in place those reforms and innovations. It was not easy. Nevertheless, I hope that following the award the Government and future Governments continue to pursue the directions and objectives that were set when those reforms were put in place.

I am concerned to hear comments in the media that are attributed to members of the Opposition calling for the introduction of mandatory reporting of alleged child maltreatment. I can assume only that those comments are made by people who do not understand the facts or who simply take an emotional point of view on some severe cases of child maltreatment. There is no-one I know - at least no-one I know who is sane - who does not find child maltreatment abhorrent. However, when we consider all the facts, we cannot support the introduction of mandatory reporting on the basis of trying to stop child maltreatment. The procedures that have been put in place in Western Australia will be adopted around the world. There is no doubt that those procedures will need to be refined and continually worked through to ensure that the best results possible are achieved. However, mandatory reporting simply ties up resources following allegations that in many cases cause more harm to the family unit than they do good in trying to identify or expose child maltreatment.

No-one would suggest that we should not protect children who are maltreated or who are at risk, but the facts show that mandatory reporting only appeases the consciences of those who do not know how to deal with the problem or who believe that making it compulsory to report any allegation somehow stops the maltreatment or horrific abuse. That is not true. To my knowledge - I have undertaken a lot of research in this area - nowhere in the world where mandatory reporting exists has there been a subsequent decrease in child maltreatment.

The Governor talked about health services. I will comment on the Mandurah hospital. I hope that now the election is over the construction of that hospital will proceed and the people who were trying to make political mileage through disrupting and scaring people over that hospital remain quiet. I hope they will wait and see what the hospital delivers. If they then feel that it does not deliver, by all means they may criticise. However, I hope they do not try to create public hysteria during the two year construction period. The Mandurah area faces a difficult problem with hospital services. There is no doubt that the hospital is badly needed; however, I do not see any gain in trying to scare people about what may or may not happen.

I urge the Minister for Water Resources to continue with the water theft Bill. That legislation is long overdue. It is one of the things I would like to have completed as the Minister. I hope he is able to pursue and implement that Bill with some urgency because I believe there are problems associated with the theft of water and unlawful intervention in the water supply, particularly in some irrigation areas.

My electorate of Mandurah faces some key issues, one of which is the Kwinana Freeway extension. I am not alone in this; other members in this House are also keen to see that freeway extended. I consider it of utmost priority for our community. Residents in the Mandurah and Rockingham areas deserve to have that freeway extended so they can access the services, facilities and employment opportunities in the metropolitan area. I hope this Government can find avenues to bring forward the projected construction time frame and see the freeway completed through to Mandurah by 2005 to 2008. I know that that period is well ahead of the forecast construction timetable, but it is imperative that that occur.

I have lobbied publicly for a rail service to Mandurah since I have been in this Chamber. I recognise that it would not be viable for any Government to build a rail service to Mandurah at the moment, but it is imperative that the area have a reliable and suitable public transport service. I thank the Department of Transport and those who were involved in implementing the express bus service. It took something like six years of lobbying to get that express service in place. The demand for that service is now so strong that the buses have been full and have had to leave people behind. That problem has been resolved for the short term. My fear is that if an additional coach is not included in that service, the problem of people not being able to fit on the buses will return and the goodwill that has been built up through a good service will be eroded.

The other issues I will address are positive issues. The cultural centre for which the Government has committed around \$14m will be completed shortly and will be opened in June. I thank the Government on behalf of the people of Mandurah for its commitment to that centre. Some people still do not understand how the cultural centre will fit into the bigger picture; however, it will form the basis of a growing tourism and entertainment industry. Although in itself it will not create the industry, it will provide a badly needed entertainment outlet and function centre.

Another project that is needed to stimulate that commercial tourism industry is the Mandurah marina. I am confident the Government will ensure that marina is developed in the next four or so years. The hospital I have spoken about and the TAFE college that was opened are examples of the commitment this Government has shown to the Mandurah area.

I will comment on general issues which are worth debating, whether it be in this Chamber or the broader community. One member suggested in a speech in the Address-in-Reply debate that we should introduce death duties. I would like it put on record that I am totally opposed to the introduction of death duties. It is a very insidious way of raising revenue. I support a change in the way we raise revenue. I am unashamedly a supporter of a broad-based tax on consumption. The reintroduction of death duties would be a retrograde step and an absolute disaster. As I have said before, the taxation system in this nation should be changed. There is no doubt that our country will continue to stagger from one crisis to the next until such time as we see taxation reform. I hope that the federal coalition Government has the internal fortitude and foresight to bring forward a wide-ranging taxation change that will see the burden of taxation spread across the people so that the PAYE earners of our nation are not the major contributors to the taxation system. Our system at the moment deals harshly with PAYE earners while large companies pay relatively little tax and many people who receive a lot of income pay very little. That will not serve our nation as we go into the next century. I hope that our taxation system will be overhauled in the very near future.

We have heard some debate about work for the dole. I commend the Federal Government for raising the issue. I hope that the Federal Government's program will see people who are about to begin working for the dole given opportunities to be skilled and have access to work opportunities that will lead to employment. I hope that the Federal Government also puts in place some very clear process whereby people who are not prepared to work or refuse to do so do not continue to get handouts from the Government. A balance will be needed but I believe it is a step forward. Those bleeding hearts who say that it should not happen must reflect on what has happened in this country over the past two decades. The system has not worked and we really need to look at some changes. This is a positive step.

As we go into this year and the Budget is brought down, I hope members of this House are able to recognise the importance of financial constraint. As a Minister I was aware that although we would like to promise everyone everything, it is irresponsible. The only way this Government and the State can go ahead is to manage with fiscal responsibility and to ensure we do not throw away all the hard-won benefits of budget control. If we maintain our direction, reduce debt and expand our value adding in the resources sector, I have no doubt that we will see jobs flowing through to local communities and that the State will prosper, and in turn the people of this State will benefit. If we go down the other road of short term gains by borrowing and throwing away all the good work we have done, it will load our children with a debt which, quite frankly, may be impossible for them to discharge.

I hope new members of this House will take the opportunity to contribute wherever possible because new ideas and new blood are the essence of creating a better world. I trust everyone will feel comfortable in contributing to the debates rather than being shackled to the narrow views of one group or another.

MR OSBORNE (Bunbury) [5.35 pm]: I take the opportunity in the Address-in-Reply debate to address briefly a couple of issues which will impact on Bunbury, my electorate for the next four years, and also to talk about some important aspects of the Governor's speech which are important for this Government and this Parliament. Before I do that, Mr Acting Speaker, I ask you to pass on my congratulations to Mr Speaker on his election. The current Speaker has worked very hard as Chairman of Committees and Deputy Speaker for the last several years in this place and has chaired the important Select Committee on Standing Procedures. I believe the recommendations of its report are worthwhile. If the changes are introduced to the committee system and this House, the Parliament will be better for it.

I take the opportunity formally to congratulate all new members elected at the last election, especially members on my own side and more especially members from the South West Region, the member for Vasse and my close friend the member for Mitchell.

Mr Graham: That is him done!

Mr OSBORNE: I do not think it will do any harm. I expect him at least to equal my performance and achieve a further swing at the 2001 election and join me in the privileged position of holding what will become a safe seat. We are proud of the fact that the seats of the south west are held by the coalition. We are conscious that political pendulums can swing. Although we enjoy good standing in the electorate at the moment, the reality is that can change. We are also conscious that many people who came to support the coalition at the last election were those who are termed Howard's battlers - the ordinary working people who came to the coalition because they accept that we offer hope for employment and better prospects for the future. We intend to deliver on our commitments to them to provide employment, economic growth, financial reform and social dividends that those people have earned in this State. I would like to take the opportunity to thank my campaign committee and my chairman, Mr Tom Dillon, who worked hard during the election campaign to ensure my re-election. He could not have done what he did without the support of his wife, Bev. I thank her also. A number of people on my committee were with me in 1993, particularly Mrs Vera Guinness and Miss Cheryl Stiles. They were central to my victory at the last election. I thank them for their help. Denise Moyes, Sylvia Griffin and Bernice Rumens were also critical to the success we enjoyed in the seat

of Bunbury at the last election. I place on record my gratitude for the work which they did for me and the Liberal Party and for the Government, not only during the election campaign but in the last four years.

I wish to refer to a number of issues which have arisen in the past four years in this place which are important to the electorate of Bunbury, and then to a couple of issues in respect of the Governor's speech. A number of issues which were raised not only during the election campaign, but also prior to it are important and I will continue to pursue them on behalf of the people of Bunbury. I refer to matters such as the control of Argentine ants. After many years of research I think an effective control for Argentine ants has been discovered.

As members are aware, the Argentine ant is a pest which came into Western Australia in the 1940s and since then has spread unchecked throughout the State. The previous Government abandoned the use of heptachlor to control Argentine ants and when that was done, for very good environmental and health reasons, the Argentine ant numbers exploded, particularly in Bunbury which is one of the most heavily infested areas of Western Australia. After years of research it seems that a fully effective, non-organochlorine control has been found and a series of trials have been conducted in a variety of settings - bush, suburban and horticultural - and most recently a trial was conducted in the East Bunbury part of my electorate. It appears it has been almost a total success. We have waited through the summer period to make sure the success is complete and I will be asking the Minister for Primary Industry to carry on with what must now happen. The first thing that must happen is that some money must be spent to undertake a total audit of the extent of Argentine ant infestation in Western Australia and beyond that funding for a control program must be found, not necessarily by the Government. It may be that the control agent can be commercialised or the control can be shared with local authorities. It seems that over the next four years between \$3.25m and \$3.5m will be required to eradicate Argentine ants from Western Australia. I and many people in my electorate will look forward to that outcome.

Another issue is the preservation of tuart forest bushlands. I have written to the Minister for the Environment on this issue because it involves a significant area of 65 hectares of tuart bushland in the southern part of my electorate and I am committed to the preservation and effective management of that area. It has the potential to become a tourist and environmental resource of not only national, but also international standing, and Government support for the management and planning of that tuart bushland is important.

I am looking forward to a solution to a longstanding transport issue in my electorate. It relates to an issue that my colleagues, the members for Mitchell and Vasse, have been working on; that is, a related series of transport corridors. I refer to the Gelorup bypass, also known as the Bunbury outer ring road. An alignment for that road is yet to be decided. When that is done, a port access road alignment into the Bunbury Port can be finalised and the longstanding problem of the Picton bypass can be solved. It may sound esoteric or distant to members, but it is a crucial transport problem which has the potential to drastically impact on lifestyle and environment in the Bunbury electorate. As soon as the Bunbury outer ring road issue is solved, there will be a solution to the Bunbury Port access road and that solution cannot come quickly enough.

This year I shall refer to the Minister for Health a number of health issues in my electorate. The budget for the Bunbury Regional Hospital is of concern. I understand public hospitals throughout Australia are under enormous budgetary pressure, and Bunbury is no different. However, the Bunbury Regional Hospital is in an unusual situation because a hospital in a country setting is being asked to do more with less funds and I will ask the Minister for Health to look at the situation to ensure that the Bunbury Regional Hospital is fairly treated in the Health budget.

I am keen on the creation of an aged care health campus on the site of the present Bunbury Regional Hospital. It is a valuable site but it can be transferred to aged care. An aging population is an issue in this electorate and across Australia. In south west centres it is probably more extreme than it is across the general population. There tend to be more retirees in Mandurah, Bunbury and Busselton than in other areas of this State. The development of an aged care health campus on the site of the existing Bunbury Regional Hospital is a high priority.

Finally, I am very excited about the imminent conclusion of the Bunbury back beach project. Members may recall that along the west coast last winter there were extreme storms. Bunbury did not escape those storms. The Bunbury back beach was savaged during last winter and critical infrastructure such as roads, a restaurant and a surf club were under threat of being lost to the sea. For several years we have recognised the necessity to put in place protection for the beach and dunes on the beach and also to rationalise the system of roads, to look at the reserves that exist in the area and explore the possibility of residential and commercial development on Bunbury's back beach to make it more of a resource of which the people of Bunbury and the region can be proud.

On 4 November last year Cabinet met in Bunbury and I was asked to chair the Bunbury Back Beach Enhancement Steering Committee. The job of that committee was to assess submissions which had been made on a structure plan and make recommendations to Cabinet on the final form of that plan. I am pleased to advise the House that process is almost completed. We have examined a large number of public submissions and shortly I expect to be passing the

result of the committee's work to Cabinet in the hope, if not the expectation, that there will be a commitment from the Government in the coming Budget to begin the work of restoring the back beach area.

I will conclude by touching on two broader issues. I said at the outset that one of them was not mentioned in the Governor's speech and it is an important issue as you, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr Ainsworth), will agree. I refer to the matter of road safety. It has been brought to a tragic focus recently in Bunbury with the loss of two very fine young men, Jason and Darryl Krikke, sons of well known speedway enthusiasts, John and Ron, who are well known to people in Bunbury. I suspect members have read the news of the death of those two young men. It happens frequently; and how many times have we seen a situation where young people have been killed in road accidents which are so pointless, tragic and expensive?

The work of the Select Committee on Road Safety which you, Mr Acting Speaker, chaired in the previous Parliament was important. I have the reports in my hand. The committee was sometimes remarked upon for the length of time it sat and the number of reports it produced. There was not a more important select committee in the previous Parliament than the Select Committee on Road Safety. Last year there were 247 road fatalities in Western Australia; every one of them was a tragedy and many of them could have been avoided with the implementation of some fairly straightforward recommendations.

I am delighted the Minister for Transport has taken a strong personal interest in the road safety issue. The Office of Road Safety has been established and the integrated and comprehensive program which is necessary to successfully address the issue of road safety in Western Australia is under way. In the past there have been fragmentary and incoherent responses to this issue and with the work done by the current Minister for Transport - I applaud him for what he has done - I hope those days are behind us.

On 1 January the Minister announced one initiative. He ordered a detailed profile of all the 247 road fatalities last year. The objective of this research exercise is to find out exactly what sorts of behaviours, situations and attitudes were present at the time of those fatal road accidents. It is only when we have built up a complete and scientific picture of what happens when people are killed on the roads that we can put in place an effective program to control the road fatality situation. Yesterday the Minister announced in the media a further research program. All young people in Western Australia who receive a driver's licence in the next three months will be asked to participate in a survey to assess their attitudes, temperaments, and accident records in a further attempt to come to grips with those factors that cause young people to be involved in fatal road accidents.

A third measure in which the Minister for Transport was recently involved was the announcement on 18 February of a new driver training centre and the launch of the "Drive for Life" program at Gloucester Park. The people involved in that program will be trained under practical driving situations to control vehicles in emergencies and to drive in unusual situations, such as at night and on wet and gravel roads. At the moment people are not necessarily well equipped to deal with those situations. We all understand the process of getting a driver's licence involves passing a test, but it does not include learning to drive in a wide range of situations. Young people bone up on the road rules and take a one hour or half-hour test in broad daylight, generally in suburban areas, and obtain a licence. Often they are ill-equipped to deal with an emergency at night in the country on the shoulder of a gravel road. This driver training centre launched by the Minister for Transport on 18 February will go a great way towards solving the problem of inadequate preparation for young drivers.

I now refer to one matter which caught my attention in the Governor's speech; that is, in the next four years the Government will actively encourage economic development and growth in Western Australia. The Government intends to achieve that by the introduction of an industry and technology development Bill. I have a personal interest in this matter and I understand many others share that interest. Information technology is an important area which Western Australia must urgently address. Even now, although the industry is young, there are clear signs that Western Australia is falling behind other States in this country. Certainly, this country is falling behind future information technology powerhouses, such as Japan, Taiwan and Korea. We must urgently address this matter if we are to stay in touch.

At the federal level the current Minister for Industry, Science and Tourism, John Moore, announced last August the formation of an information industries task force. It is to build on the work of the previous Government which encouraged the location of information technology companies in Australia with the provision of tax concessions, fast tracking of business approvals and so on. The Minister's objective is to assess whether the previous Government's programs had been effective, and to find out what now must happen for the information technology industry to assume a more important part in the Australian economy. It is very important at the moment.

Between 1990 and 1995 exports of information technology related material in Australia increased from \$432m to \$1.5b. In 1995-96 information technology contributed \$15b in revenue to the Australian economy. Taking into

account that the wine industry is worth \$4m a year in exports, it can be seen that information technology is already a significant industry in this country.

Some of the data is questionable. It is hard to get a handle on what IT is doing in the Australian economy. Many exports are counted incorrectly or not at all. For example, if a computer is imported, and a modem is installed or further work done on it and it is then exported, the Australian Bureau of Statistics counts the total value of that computer as an IT export for Australia. That clearly is not accurate. Also, Australian information technology expertise in motor vehicles, for example, is not counted when a vehicle is exported. There are significant gaps in the data on information technology but, that aside, it is clear that IT is a large part of the Australian economy.

It is important because it gives Western Australia, particularly country people, in whom I am naturally interested, an opportunity to overcome the tyranny of distance. This technology can instantly put this State in touch with the rest of the world and allow it to conduct commercial transactions and communications. The potential for information technology to transplant a State such as Western Australia from its former position of isolation into a central position in the world economy is enormous. We must take advantage of the opportunity offered. It gives an opportunity to think of ourselves in a different light; that is, instead of thinking of ourselves as laid back and casual, we can start to see ourselves as other people in the world see us - innovative, hard working and clever.

There are many areas in which Australia leads the world, especially in software, mining imaging, medical software, distance education, banking and encryption. Other opportunities exist; for example, if people in Europe or the United States write software programs one day, they can be sent to Australia to be debugged overnight and be ready for use the following day. Australia's position in the globe offers a great opportunity in information technology.

It also represents an important stage in the evolution of the Australian economy from mining and farming, through the export of primary produce and the export and downstream processing of mineral resources to the export of services such as tourism and education. Information technology offers an opportunity to develop the Australian economy to a new level. For that, and a wide range of reasons, the development of the information technology industry and the creation of an information technology portfolio in Western Australia are crucial. Western Australia faces the risk of falling behind, as Australia does at an international level. One has only to read the media, information technology magazines, inserts in newspapers such as *The Australian*, or home pages on the Internet to recognise that the Government of Victoria, for example, is well ahead of the Government of Western Australia in the pursuit of information technology.

Mr Cowan: That is absolute nonsense.

Mr OSBORNE: I am glad to hear it.

Mr Cowan: They are masters at issuing a glossy brochure.

Mr OSBORNE: The perception in the industry is that Victoria has stolen a march on other States. I am pleased to hear the Deputy Premier say that is nonsense. It is a most important area and it is important for Western Australia to be at the forefront of developing the potential of that industry.

I conclude by thanking the House for its attention and indicating my support for the motion.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.30 pm

MR BROWN (Bassendean) [7.30 pm]: In debating the Address-in-Reply I wish to discuss, firstly, the last state election and, secondly, a number of matters of concern to constituents in my electorate. I am extremely indebted to the electorate of Bassendean for the honour they bestowed on me at the last election by giving me the opportunity to represent them. Bassendean is a new electorate and is derived from the former electorates of Morley and Maylands. The Bassendean electorate contains 60 per cent of the former electorate of Morley, for which I was the sitting member. I am indebted to Labor Party branches in the area and members and supporters for the support I received. I am also indebted for the significant support I received from people in the community who disclosed to me that they were not aligned, were swinging voters or were coalition supporters who would vote for me on this occasion. I thank each and every one of those people who supported my candidature.

It is important for members of this place to make themselves accessible to their constituents. I endeavoured to do that during my first term of office, and will endeavour to continue doing so during this term. It is no secret that the way to do that is to make oneself available to attend community functions, by doing what might colloquially be called shopping centre visits, regular doorknocking, issuing newsletters and surveys, and ensuring a strong interaction with community, sporting, business and other groups within the community who shape and foster the community spirit. Since the election I have continued to carry out the shopping centre visits, to doorknock - much to the surprise of some constituents - to issue newsletters and surveys and to interact with community groups. I find all of that satisfying and rewarding. I thank members of the constituency and supporters for bestowing their trust in me by

allowing me to represent them in this place for a further four years. I hope in that time I can demonstrate that their trust was correctly placed.

This election was particularly difficult for the Labor Party. During the election campaign television advertisements were placed by both parties, particularly the coalition. Although the figures are not yet available, it seems that the coalition outspent the Labor Party in the order of 5:1 in television commercials. It was a very negative campaign. The coalition's television advertisements with images of Geoff Gallop, Brian Burke and a number of other people were designed to present a negative image of the leadership of Dr Gallop, the Leader of the Opposition. As he said during the election campaign, it was surprising that he was not blamed by the coalition for sins committed by his great-great grandfather who was transported to Australia as a convict, because virtually every other sin that had affected mankind was blamed on him in some way or other. It was not a campaign about new ideas or vision; it was an extremely negative campaign. It was misleading in the context that the two major coalition themes in the election campaign were, first, that state debt had been reduced. We all know that the books can be changed when one measures debt by looking at the levels of debt to equity. A number of state assets, including BankWest and the government car fleet, were sold and the proceeds of those sales were applied to debt reduction. It is akin to selling the house to pay the mortgage. Not much intellect is required in all of that. However, it was presented as somehow paying this debt from revenues and reserves rather than from the selling of state assets. Be that as it may, elections come and go. The people of Western Australia will have a coalition Government for the next four years and they will judge the degree to which they made a wise choice in four years' time.

I join with others in congratulating you, Mr Speaker, on your elevation to this most important job. It is one that requires great wisdom, tact, diplomacy and tolerance. You will have 56 markers to determine whether you succeed in what is a very demanding position. At the end of four years it will be interesting to see if you have passed the test and, if you are successful at the next election, whether you aspire to that position again. In those four years you may well decide that it is most unwise to aspire to that position again.

I offer my congratulations to all new members in this place. Having last election been a new member, with a number of others, I know what a daunting task members face. Members will find a great deal of not only satisfaction but frustration in being here. That is the case whether one is on the government or the opposition side. Generally, there is more frustration on the opposition side and less on the other side. Nevertheless, as we have seen from comments made by various members on both sides of the House after the election, one cannot be sure that sitting on one side or the other guarantees that one does not suffer from frustration in not being able to get certain ideas implemented.

A number of matters have been raised with me by either community groups or constituents. The first is the need for a community centre in Lockridge. The residents and community groups in Lockridge have long been campaigning for the construction of a proper community centre. More recently, residents have written directly to the Minister for Family and Children's Services.

Mrs van de Klashorst: The Minister called out there a couple of weeks ago.

Mr BROWN: The member for Swan Hills advises that the Minister met a number of Lockridge community groups. I am pleased the Minister took the time to do so. I have a file containing copies of the letters sent to the Minister for Family and Children's Services. As the thickness of the file attests, many letters have been sent by members of the community urging the Minister to allocate funds within the forthcoming state Budget for a community centre.

Mrs van de Klashorst: It is a much needed facility.

Mr BROWN: I agree with the member for Swan Hills. I believe a suggestion was made that funds would not be provided and that those seeking funds would have to approach the Lotteries Commission. If that is the case, it is a most unsatisfactory state of affairs. Funds have been provided for other community centres. In the marginal seat of Ballajura, just a stone's throw away and on the border of the electorate of Bassendean, significant sums were allocated by the Government for the construction of one or two community centres. I fail to see why it should be a government responsibility in a marginal seat and a Lotteries Commission responsibility in the seat of Bassendean.

I hope this funding allocation is not based on achieving electoral outcomes for the coalition. Funding should be allocated according to genuine need. There is a real need for funding to be allocated for a community centre in Lockridge. I placed this matter on the agenda two years ago and spoke about it last year. I will remind members about that need when the Budget is brought down later this year. I hope that will not be necessary and that I am able to say to the Minister for Family and Children's Services that I am pleased with the Budget because funds have been allocated for a community centre in Lockridge.

The residents of Lockridge are extremely pleased about its redevelopment. As a result of redevelopment the composition of its population will change. However, the accommodation being offered there will be very attractive to young families and people who do not have enormous incomes. Although the suburb will be more attractive and

more inviting, a fair weighting of its population will be on low and medium incomes. They will need strong community services as either support for, or an ancillary to, enhancing the quality of their lifestyles. Notwithstanding the transition taking place in the community, the allocation of funds for a community centre is warranted.

The next matter concerns what could be deemed a transference of responsibility from the Federal Government to the State Government and its impact on constituents in my electorate. Members will be aware that in the last federal coalition Budget the dental program introduced by the Keating Government was abolished. As a result the criteria under which dental treatment is available through the Perth Dental Hospital were narrowed so that some people who could previously obtain treatment are now precluded from obtaining it. For example, some very low income people on part pensions are now unable to get that treatment. They are certainly unable to afford the cost of private dental treatment or private health insurance. A group of Australians are now unable to have that treatment and inevitably must bear the pain and frustration of failing to maintain proper dental care. This federal cutback will place extra pressure on the State Government to make up those funds.

I have been requested by constituents to make representations to the Minister for Health to try to ensure that the criteria previously used when federal funds were available are reinstated. That change in criteria certainly means a lower standard of living for those constituents.

Likewise, we have seen the heartless moves by the federal coalition Government to slash legal aid. When John Howard was elected as Prime Minister of Australia he said that his Government was for the battlers. As you know, Mr Speaker, there are many battlers who cannot afford to go to solicitors, but who need legal advice or representation. It is a fairly heartless move by the federal coalition to slash legal aid, thereby denying people an opportunity to enforce the rights they would otherwise have. What does that mean for the State? As a result of federal government cutbacks, the State will be pressured to make up the shortfall. If that does not occur and the Federal Government continues on that course, my constituents will be severely disadvantaged.

I received a number of letters from constituents, one of whom is a senior citizen, about AlintaGas' fixed charges. I wrote to the Minister raising those concerns. The Minister wrote back in the following terms -

The supply charge is a charge for the service of supplying natural gas to customers' homes. It has been introduced to recover some of the fixed costs involved in ensuring Alinta Gas customers have gas available to use how and when they choose. All Alinta Gas customers pay the same supply charge because the fixed costs of supply remain the same regardless of the amount of gas used.

Natural gas is available to your constituent's house every day of the year, even though he chooses to use it only during the winter. Alinta Gas incurs the cost of supplying natural gas to his home all year, such as putting the pipe in the ground, providing a meter, maintaining the distribution network, and ensuring a reliable supply is available.

I sent that to various people who have written to me, one of whom wrote back in the following terms -

I wish to thank you for taking so much interest in my small problem. I am beginning to think the minister thinks we pensioners have all lost our marbles and aren't able to work things out any more.

When we were wanting a heater, I went into the then SEC and was told gas was the way to go, it would always be cheaper than electricity - so we went to the expense of having it connected.

Now that it's two departments how can it ever be cheaper - two meter readings two accounts are just two of the extras costs. This Government certainly has done many strange things.

That is from one of the senior citizens in my electorate and reflects the tenor of other letters that I received.

Mr Barnett: I am sure you pointed out that the price of gas was reduced by 11 per cent.

Mr BROWN: I referred them to the Minister's letter.

The other matter concerns traffic in my electorate. For some considerable time I have been pressing for a number of changes such as traffic lights, walk signals, etc. For about the past two years I have been pushing for turn arrows at the corner of Beechboro and Benara Roads and have been promised them on a number of occasions. I hope they will be installed before the end of the financial year. I have also been promised that lights will be installed at the corner of Lord Street and Benara Road.

A petition with hundreds of signatures has been taken up by residents calling for walk signals to be installed at the intersection of Lord Street and Guildford Road. That was a particular concern following an accident at a crossing, where a school girl was knocked down by a vehicle. I hope that by raising the matter here, and as I continually raise it with the Minister for Transport - I will do so after making this speech tonight - we will see some action on it. As

I have told people in my electorate, sometimes politics is like Berger Paints: One must keep on keeping on. That is the only way to get across the message. If it is not done by 30 June, the message will be given again.

The other matter I wish to raise concerns Homeswest. I am very conscious of the professionalism shown by Homeswest and its officers. However, some of the policies followed by the department are out of focus with policies pursued by other departments. I will explain. In recent years the Government has claimed that departments and agencies must have a customer focus; it is important to provide services for the customer and to meet customer needs. Various departments and agencies have carried out surveys about what customers want. Is that Homeswest's philosophy?

Mr Prince: Yes.

Mr BROWN: If it is, why do we now have a zoning policy that does not allow people to nominate the suburb in which they wish to live, but rather designates a zone to which they can be transferred and in which they do not wish to live? Why do we now have a one-offer policy? If people who have been on the waiting list for three or four years are allocated a house in a suburb in which they do not wish to live and they refuse to take that house, they go to the bottom of the list. I would like to know how this is customer focused and seeking to meet customers' needs. For the life of me, I cannot see it. This is a policy for administrative convenience; it is not a customer-focused policy.

I recently wrote to the new Minister for Housing about a very important case involving a low income family with disabled children. The Minister was very good; he rang my office and organised for the offer of a house. These people wanted a house in Beechboro, which is a difficult area in which to find a house. They were offered a house in Stoneville, which is not close to Beechboro. Admittedly, after going back to Homeswest, a second offer was made. That offer was for a house in Ashfield. It was a small house in which they were unable to place their furniture and it appeared that Homeswest had not taken into account the nature of the family. We are told - but we do not have a formal reply - that that is the end of the matter and that the family will now be required to wait its turn. I fail to see how this is customer focused. For the life of me, I cannot see it.

I respect the professionalism of Homeswest, the Executive Director, Greg Joyce - who has been of great assistance - Bill Bowker, the Midland branch manager, and the many other accommodation managers in the way they deal with my office and the general public. However, I cannot see how the policies they are required to follow allow them to have a customer focus. In my view, and that of many of my constituents, it is out of step with the policy that there should be a customer focus in departments.

Another matter I wish to raise concerns a constituent of mine who was assaulted. Following the assault, my constituent went to court and a person was convicted of that offence. My constituent raised a number of concerns. Firstly, victim impact statements that had been produced were lost somewhere by government officers. Secondly, the penalty imposed by the court was not enforced. In fact, the court decided at a later date, at the request of the convicted person, to change the penalty. My constituent was most upset. Nevertheless, she thought that it would be wise to raise her concerns directly with the Attorney General so that he could understand the way she felt as a victim of crime. I wrote to the Attorney General on three occasions requesting a meeting with him and my constituent. We finally received a reply stating that he did not need to meet my constituent. Of course, this constituent is a voter in the Bassendean electorate. As such, she votes in the East Metropolitan region, which elects the Attorney General. Yet, the Attorney General is so busy and such an important person that he refuses to meet her. My constituent has asked the following questions -

- (1) Why has the AG refused to meet with your constituents to discuss the matter of convicted criminals not carrying out their sentencing requirements?

That is not a bad question; it is not unreasonable. Her questions continue -

- (2) I would like the AG to be asked why he does not take seriously the issue brought to his attention regarding convicted offenders not carrying out their sentencing.
- (3) Why is he ignoring this fact which was confirmed in writing to him by Richard Foster from the Ministry of Justice?
- (4) When and how does he intend to address this issue?
- (5) When can the community expect the AG will take the matter of law and order seriously and put appropriate accountability measures in place to ensure convicted criminals carry out their sentence in full?

My constituent then asked why it takes months to get a reply from the Attorney General. We had to write two or three reminder letters to get a reply.

During the last election campaign the Government ran on the slogan of "more jobs and better management". It did not use that slogan during the recent campaign, and one does not need to ask why. This is not better management: It is absolute arrogance. I find it appalling that a matter of this nature can be ignored by the Attorney General of this State when this Government has said that it has compassion and concern for victims of crime.

I will raise some other issues in the brief time available. I promised a constituent that I would raise in the Parliament the issue of the discontinuation of government funding for the vitamin A program operated by Professor Bill Musk. If time permitted I could read detailed correspondence from the Asbestos Diseases Society, from Professor Musk and so on. Unfortunately I do not have that time. Suffice it to say that the vitamin A program has been very successful. To the year 2020, this State will have an increasing number of people dying from asbestos-related disease. Each and every year, more people will die from long-latency, asbestos-related diseases, yet without compassion the Government has cut off the funding for the program. How can the Minister justify that?

Mr Prince: That is not true!

Mr BROWN: The Minister should tell that to the Asbestos Diseases Society.

Mr Prince: I have. There is \$230 000 sitting in the Health Department to continue that program. Three scientists are evaluating what has been done by Professor Musk.

Mr BROWN: Make it available. Let us see the colour of the money.

Mr Prince: It is there. It is run through the Sir Charles Gairdner Foundation.

Amendment to Motion

Mr BROWN: I move -

That the following words be added to the motion -

but the House regrets to advise Your Excellency that equitable access to educational opportunities for all Western Australians is under threat by new policies promoted by the State Government.

MR RIPPER (Belmont - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [8.05 pm]: The Opposition has moved the amendment not in order to have a knockdown and drag out fight, but to raise a serious issue in education policy. We look forward to the Government's response because it may have something to say about how it will protect equitable access to education for all citizens.

I start by relaying a couple of stories. Ten years ago I was an organiser for the State School Teachers Union. I went to Warburton and found that the teachers started the school day by seating the students in a line outside the showers. The teachers went down the line squeezing a little dollop of shampoo onto the head of each student. They showered the students and got them into school uniforms, and I imagine that some food was provided to them. The students spent their day in education which was more orientated to middle class suburbia than the needs of that community. At the end of the day, the students went back to live in the humpies and the dirt. That is one example of the circumstances with which our education system must cope.

Another example is closer to home. This week I attended a meeting of the Kewdale Senior High School P & C Association at which the principal advised the association that he had instituted a breakfast program at the school's canteen. This was necessary because a number of students were coming to school without breakfast. In some circumstances, the students did not even have an adult staying in the home overnight because of parental neglect.

Those students will be disadvantaged in our education system if we do not ensure that we honour the historic obligation of the public education system to provide equality of opportunity in our community. That is a very important role of our public education system. It has other roles to promote tolerance and cohesion in our society, but one of the most important roles is the major assurance that equality of opportunity will prevail in our community. The public education system does that by seeking to provide comparable educational facilities wherever students are located, no matter what their circumstances. It seeks to do that by providing measures of redress when students face particular disadvantages.

The role of the public education system in providing support for equality of opportunity is recognised in the annual report of the Education Department. It lists a number of principles on which public education in this State is based. It then lists under equity that "All students, irrespective of personal circumstances and location, should have comparable opportunity to develop the understanding, skills and attitudes relevant to their individual needs." This is a very important issue, Mr Speaker.

I have given a couple of examples of differing circumstances, but much more appropriate information is available in the report from the Institute of Child Health Research and the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The Western Australian child health survey looked at a range of factors affecting the situation of students in our education system. It is interesting to examine some of the results of that survey. For example, the rate of low overall academic competence was 30 per cent among students from the lowest income families - that is those families earning less than \$20 000 per annum - yet the figure was only 17 per cent among higher income families.

The parents did not disagree with that finding because they were concerned about the educational future of their children. The report outlined that over 18 per cent of students from families in the lowest income quintile - that is, a parental income of \$20 000 or less per annum - were considered by their parents as progressing less than satisfactorily in their education and learning skills. In the higher income group, only nine per cent of parents thought their children were performing less than satisfactorily.

We have a significant problem in the education system where, on objective measures, students from families with very low incomes are not performing as well as students with more fortunate families. The family members themselves also hold that view.

I am concerned about the situation of our disadvantaged schools. I now quote a few more figures from the report which indicate the situation faced by these disadvantaged schools. For example, 22 per cent of their students have care givers in the household who have no jobs; 15 per cent of their students have a record of a half day or more per week absent from school; 17 per cent of their students have principal care givers whose education level was less than year 10; 48 per cent of students in the disadvantaged schools come from families in which the household income is less than \$30 000 per annum.

Clearly, a significant issue confronts our education system. We must provide measures to ensure equality of opportunity for students. It is clear from the figures cited that a big job is in front of the education system. It is clear also from the figures that too many children from lower income families are not realising their full potential.

My concern in this debate is that a number of threats apply to this historic role of the public education system. Firstly, a threat applies to equality of opportunity because of the possibilities of reduced support for, and a lowered standing of, the public school system as a whole. Secondly, threats come from the undermining of that comparable provision of education no matter where schools are located. Thirdly, threats are made to equality of opportunity by undermining the special provisions in schools with particular levels of disadvantage.

It is important for the future of the public schools system that middle class people continue to provide support to the system. If those people with the financial capacity and interest in education to move their children to the private system do so, a vicious cycle could develop. What will happen then? As people move out of the public school system, it becomes less attractive to other middle class families. It reduces the level of public support and interest in the public school system, as well as reducing the public pressure for quality education to be provided. Therefore, a drift from the state school system to the private school system can in due course become a rush if it is allowed. It is very important that we provide continuing support for a quality state school system to prevent all those families with the capacity and the interest in educating their children in the private school system, if they can get into it, doing so and the state school system in the long term becoming a residual system for the families who do not have the financial capacity or the interest in education to move their children to the private sector.

One development that is particularly disturbing is the new policy adopted by the federal Liberal Government on the funding of the state and private school sectors. I understand the Federal Government has abolished its new schools policy, which had certain restrictions on the establishment of new, independent, federally funded private schools. Those restrictions have now been removed. However, even more disturbing than that is the Federal Government's proposal to fund the increased establishment of new private schools by what is called an enrolment benchmark adjustment. It proposes to take money from the States for every student that it says has moved from the government sector to the private sector. Therefore, federal money given to Western Australia for education in our state school system will diminish by just over \$1 700 per student judged by the Commonwealth Government to have moved from the government sector to the private sector. That is not to say that the State Government will save \$1 700 for every student that moves from the government sector to the private sector. Of course, the State Government may save money by having to educate a smaller number of children; however, I doubt whether the State Government will be able to find the full \$1 700. Consequently, there will be an increased strain on resources in our state school system. That federal policy which will at the same time promote the establishment of new private schools and fund that policy by excessive reductions in funding to the state school sector has the potential in the long term to contribute to the undermining of our public school system.

I turn now to a number of state government policies which might worsen the present situation where comparable educational facilities are provided no matter where schools are located. I do not say that all those policies are wrong.

There may well be arguments in favour of some of these policies. However, each of these policies has the potential to undermine the equitable provision of educational facilities. The first issue I want to discuss is devolution. A move has been going on for a number of years, initiated by Labor, to devolve power from the central education bureaucracy to individual schools. In some ways that has merit, because it provides for more flexibility at a local level and more parent involvement, it allows schools to have programs which might suit better the needs of the local community, and it allows a greater degree of professionalism among teachers. Devolution in itself is not a bad thing. However, it raises the possibility that some schools will be affluent and some will be less well resourced. Those schools whose students are disadvantaged will be the schools in poorer communities. Those schools with fewer students with disadvantages will be in the richer communities which are better able to raise funds, attract teachers, and provide the cream that makes education so much more enjoyable for teachers and students.

Mr Barnett: While that may be generally true, there are many situations where that is not the case. Many of the better schools in the newer areas are not necessarily in high socioeconomic areas. Many of the schools in the so-called wealthy areas are relatively underprivileged in the facilities they have.

Mr RIPPER: If the Minister is talking about old money, he might well be right. Of course, school facilities differ from area to area. In the country, for example, there is another educational disadvantage that I will not deal with in tonight's speech but may at a later time.

One particular aspect of devolution concerns me; that is, the proposal for local hiring and firing. Our centralised staffing system protects schools. It ensures that teachers of quality and talent are distributed equitably throughout the system. If we move to local hiring and firing, those schools at which the teaching climate is more congenial and where teachers know that extra resources will be available will be more successful in attracting teachers to their staff. Schools in the western suburbs, including Cottesloe and Claremont, will be more able to attract the best teaching staff than schools in Belmont or Rivervale. I know it is only a trial. However, if we erode the centralised hiring and firing system, we will run the risk of creating a two-tiered schools system.

The next issue is the sale of school assets. It is not necessarily an issue that will be affected more by whether the area is affluent or poor. However, it creates the possibility of different levels of facilities in different schools. If a school is lucky enough to have bushland that it can sell, then it might be able to get its computers. If it does not have land it can sell, it will not get the new facilities right away and will have to wait in the queue.

Another issue of concern is commercial sponsorship. I do not want to see students running around with McDonald's logos on their T-shirts. Aspects of commercial sponsorship can be distasteful. However, I want to deal with the question of equity. Some schools will have much more capacity to attract sponsorship and support than others. A school with a lot of business and professional parents, or schools located close to large industrial and commercial areas, and perhaps schools located not too far from Perth Airport, where the Federal Airports Corporation provides some sponsorship, will have an advantage. Schools in largely residential areas or in less affluent areas will not be able to get the same funding as their more fortunate rivals.

The key point is that some communities have a better capacity to provide additional resources to their schools than others. The poorer communities are also the ones where the students are the most disadvantaged and the most needy. All of those issues that I have raised briefly in my remarks tonight have the potential to make the schools which are already advantaged all the more advantaged and the schools which are already disadvantaged all the more disadvantaged. We run the risk of the development of intergenerational patterns of poverty and educational disadvantage. Attention has been drawn to that on page 16 of the child health survey, which states -

Attitudes and beliefs shaped by educational and social experiences can lead to disenfranchisement with education and the development within families of inter-generational patterns of non-participation in, and poor retention at, school.

In other words, a cycle of poverty and disadvantage. I have said there are some arguments for devolution, for local hiring and firing, and for the sale of school assets to provide additional facilities. No doubt the Government will argue for allowing commercial sponsorship. I want the Government to tell me how it will protect equity of access in the face of these trends. The Government has a responsibility when promoting devolution to say how in that context equity will be protected. It is an important issue for all of the electorates represented by members on this side of the House.

A further issue that I wish to address in the couple of minutes available to me is the provision of special assistance for the most disadvantaged schools. I am very concerned about the future of the priority schools program. I understand that program has been abolished and absorbed into other programs run by the Commonwealth Government. It is very worrying that schools which currently receive limited additional assistance because of the disadvantages faced by their students may not receive the same assistance in future. My understanding is that schools

have been told that in 1997 they will receive the same money as in previous years but that funding will not continue in 1998 and beyond and they can expect cuts. I have also been advised that the dedicated staff who have administered this program in regional and district offices and in head office have been taken off this task.

The Minister should make a clear statement to the House about the future of that program, because in the face of all the disadvantages that apply in some schools in poor areas, the priority schools program has been of assistance and enabled teachers to run special programs. It would be a tragedy for those schools and for equality of opportunity if that money disappeared.

MR KOBELKE (Nollamara) [8.21 pm]: I support the amendment. I am very concerned about the situation which now confronts many of our schools with respect to equity of access to education. Many members on this side gained their education through equity programs put in place by Governments in years past, and I suspect that some members opposite benefited from those programs. Neither of my parents completed the equivalent of year 10 today. They expected me to do an apprenticeship and get a job like my father, who worked at Midland Workshops. However, because of programs put in place in the 1960s by the Menzies Government, I was offered a scholarship that enabled me to stay at school, and I was fortunate in the first round of that initiative to win a scholarship to university.

In those days, many people like me were able to access education only because of a range of equity programs that were driven by the realisation that a trained and skilled work force was an economic necessity and that if money was not put into education, this country could not advance and compete internationally. However, today Governments at both state and federal levels are attacking equity programs and are not willing to ensure that people from all walks of life are given opportunities to advance through education. Education is a significant factor in our potential to develop and to take advantage of the opportunities which this great country offers, but time will not permit me to expand on that today.

Another important matter is the economic significance of ensuring that this country provides the highest possible level of education and training to its young citizens. We have seen a marked reduction in retention rates in our schools. We have seen programs at the tertiary level that discourage people from continuing to study at that level and gain higher qualifications.

Mr Barnett: Which retention rates are you talking about?

Mr KOBELKE: The retention rates through years 11 and 12 have fallen in the past few years under this Government.

Mr Barnett: You would also be conscious of contrary changes in the retention rates through years 10 and 11. There are shifts within the school years.

Mr KOBELKE: It is a very worrying trend. This Government does not appear to be addressing that matter; therefore, this country will be the poorer because people are not being given the highest possible level of training and education.

I move now to some issues which relate to the quality of education. It is my well-founded belief that the standard of education in Western Australia and throughout most of Australia is very high. That is evidenced by the fact that our students perform well in the international literacy and numeracy tests at both secondary and higher education levels. There are problems with literacy, and I will say no more than that the current utterances by the federal Minister for Education, David Kemp, are worrying. Mr Kemp is a dangerous man. He puts forward a lot of half-baked ideas that indicate that he has little or no understanding of secondary and primary education in Australia. There may be another time to debate that, because it does not fit under this amendment. Many people are concerned about his recent utterances.

An important contributing factor to the quality of education in Western Australia is, as I have said in this place previously, the dual system of government and non-government schools. I am a strong supporter of that duality. However, that duality is founded on comparable standards of education in the government and non-government school sectors. From my experience, the differences in the range and quality of education within government and non-government schools are greater than the differences between them. That provides people with the option of sending their children to either a government or non-government school in order to meet the needs of the family and, more importantly, the child. I know families which have sent one child to a government school and another to a non-government school because they have found that was best for those children.

One of the key elements of this dual system is comparability in the quality of education. However, in the past few years a range of measures have pushed people from the government school sector to the non-government school sector. The Government is failing to adequately resource and fix the problems that exist in government schools. Therefore, many people see government schools in a less flattering light. When we take that approach, we run the risk of creating a public expectation that government schools will provide education that is of lower quality. In my

experience, that is certainly not true, but when issues are promoted in the media which paint a picture of dissention, strife and dissatisfaction in one sector, people are likely to regard the other sector as offering education that is of better quality. Although it might be simply a matter of media image, it is very important that government schools project the right image so that parents can expect that their children are provided with an education that is top quality. However, we are seeing from the Howard federal Government, and unfortunately also in some respects from the Court Government, an attack on government schools.

Mr Barnett: You had better explain that. That is fascinating.

Mr KOBELKE: I will give some examples which amount to an attack on government schools. This Government is trying to save money by forcing more children into non-government schools because it will then have to pick up only a smaller percentage of the cost of educating those children. I will be frank with the Minister: When we were in government, we embarked on that course. In 1991 and 1992, a policy document suggested that we could encourage more people to move into the non-government sector.

Mr Barnett: That is quite inappropriate as a policy.

Mr KOBELKE: It is the Minister's policy.

Mr Barnett: It has never been a policy that I have endorsed, pursued or given credence to. It has never been suggested to me. It is true in a statistical sense that the cost across the State to the public purse is less if children go to non-government schools, but during my period as Education Minister there has never been any advice, recommendation or action to that effect. I find it abhorrent as a policy and I would not be part of it.

Mr KOBELKE: The Minister may not have signed off on a policy, but many of his actions are driven by the accounting approach which he and his Government have taken to education. Decisions have been made on the basis of saving money. I will mention a few of them briefly. That is what the Government was all about, both under the previous and the current Minister. It may not be stated in black and white, but the policy is to move students from the government sector to the non-government sector.

Mr Barnett: That is your supposition of the outcome of a range of policies, but there is no such policy in this State. I would never support such a policy. There is a drift to the non-government sector but I do not have an analysis of the reason for it.

Mr KOBELKE: I understand that for political reasons the Minister must make that statement, but I am talking about the reality not the perception that the Minister may wish to create in the community. I will give some examples, such as the teachers' dispute that dragged on through 1995. It was a total disaster for the quality of education in government schools -

Mr Barnett: I agree.

Mr KOBELKE: That was driven by the Minister's predecessor for his own narrow, political ends and was related largely to saving money. It did nothing for the quality of education, and it ensured that more people considered that non-government schools provided better quality education than government schools. For more than a year, no attempt was made to stop that situation. As part of the issue, non-government teachers were on a higher rate of pay than government teachers doing the same job. By allowing that situation to continue the Minister enabled non-government schools to attract many very good teachers out of government schools. I do not say they went, but there was an economic attraction because a higher rate of pay was offered in non-government schools. That situation existed before the 7.5 plus 7.5 per cent deal was done after the appointment of the current Minister for Education.

School cleaning is another example. The Minister should try to find a dirty non-government school. I doubt if he could. However, one can find many filthy government schools, with parents complaining because the Minister is not willing to provide any money to guarantee the same quality cleaning.

Mr Barnett: I challenge you to take me to a dirty government school. You will not be able to do it.

Mr KOBELKE: That is an issue on which parents will make critical judgments. When they hear complaints and look for themselves and see that schools are not adequately resourced to keep up the standard of cleanliness they had a year or so ago, they will make a decision about where they send their children. The Minister has not taken the time and effort to fix up the cleaning problem. He has sat on his hands waiting for a report. I will talk more about that report later. The evidence in the report indicates a high level of dissatisfaction with the contracting which has been put in place. That dissatisfaction relates to parents making decisions about which schools to send their children to. It is more than a perception of dissatisfaction. The facts indicate that good reasons exist for dissatisfaction about the cleaning service in many schools where the service has been contracted out.

I turn now to computers. I acknowledge that the current Minister has suddenly brought the Government into the game of providing computers. He did that for political reasons. The Minister may say that is my assertion but the facts speak for themselves. I congratulate the Minister for his actions in that regard. Unfortunately at the beginning it was no more than a political fix. During the Estimates Committee debates I asked the then acting chief executive officer what would happen. He acknowledged that it had not been worked out because it was something the Minister had put in the budget. They were spending such a huge amount on administrative computers and nothing on classroom computers, and noting the embarrassment the Minister said that \$20m would be spent on computers over three years. However, this involved sending boxes of computers and Internet connections to schools. The revamp was to provide professional development, but a large amount of money was cut from professional development. Therefore, schools cannot undertake professional development which is so necessary.

During the election campaign the Minister promised one computer for every five students -

Mr Barnett: In secondary schools.

Mr KOBELKE: That means he must produce about 35 000 computers.

Mr Barnett: I do not have the documents in front of me, but 1:5 is the target.

Mr KOBELKE: Currently it is one in forty.

Mr Barnett: No, I claim there are far more computers than that.

Mr KOBELKE: Is it one in twenty? The Minister must provide something approaching 30 000 computers but the money promised will provide only 5 000. The Minister is saying that he will produce 5 000 computers even though the schools need almost 30 000. The small print in the policy document is that the computers will be secondhand. That is, our schools can do with pass-me-down computers. There is a case for upgrading some old machines but not 30 000 of them. The Minister should talk to people in the industry, because we are talking about a few hundred computers, not 30 000.

I visited a parish-based non-government school in my electorate a few weeks ago. The school has just put in a new computer system because it wants to ensure its students are equipped to meet the needs of tomorrow. The old computers were given free of charge to a government school, which accepted them because they were better than those it had. The computers were so old they were not worth anything, but a government school was happy to pick them up because it had so little. The Minister is failing to address the situation. That is the problem of equity. If the Minister is not willing to make a major commitment well in excess of \$20m over three years, or a fraction more, which will be less than the Government has spent on administrative computers, he will not provide equity in education for children in government schools. The Minister should visit the nice, non-government schools in his electorate and see the fancy computer buildings. They have specialist built buildings with half a dozen rooms full of computers, but the Government will provide only a handful of secondhand computers.

Mr Barnett: Have you been to Warnbro or Ballajura?

Mr KOBELKE: I am talking about equity, and providing it to a couple of government schools here and there is not equity.

Mr Barnett: Would you describe Warnbro as a high socioeconomic area?

Mr KOBELKE: I am talking about the 700-odd government schools, not ten or 20 which receive decent facilities. I am talking about 700-plus government schools, most of which possess computers only through the hard work of the P & C association, or perhaps they have computers which were provided in 1988-89 by the Labor Government when a major commitment was made to provide computers in schools. Those machines are still being used even though they are obsolete. The applications to which they can be put are extremely limited, but these are the computers that most schools must use. The good schools, such as Morley Senior High School, have put a huge effort into the provision of computers, and have a range of computers. I cannot recall the exact numbers but they may have one classroom of 486s, or some 386s. They may even have some old Commodores or XTs. That technology is almost 10 years old. The schools can make limited use of them, perhaps for typing classes, but that is it. That will not prepare our students to face today's technology or the huge changes that will take place in future.

The Government has failed to meet the real needs of schools. It has failed to provide equity across the government sector so that government schools can compete with non-government schools. In the past couple of years funding for professional development has been cut so that it has become meaningless. A Labor member pointed out to me last year that she had attended a public function for schools. Only one government school was represented at the function. She spoke to the teachers who said that their professional development funding had been cut; therefore they could not bring their children to the function.

The First Steps program in mathematics is excellent, but again funding was cut last year. The program still exists but it was supposed to begin implementation this year. The Physical Steps program promoted by Hon Norman Moore was a very good three year program which should have been implemented this year, but it cannot be implemented because its funding has been cut. Two years of full funding has been provided but this year it is just a holding budget to try to stop the political flak. The program cannot proceed because the funding has been cut.

Last April the Minister promised to fix up the staffing formula arrangements. The Minister has sat on it for months. He will not improve the system by putting extra money into it. He goes on and on; he is simply worried about money instead of improving the quality of education in our schools.

I refer to the proposal over the next four years to cut \$141m in real terms from the Education budget, according to the figures presented by the Treasurer in the forward estimates. As a result of his ability and weight in Cabinet, I am sure the Minister could find extra funds; however, the promise of this Government is a cut in real terms of \$141m. I make the case that money cannot be cut from our government schools. I have already indicated that on the whole we have high quality education in our government schools. We have very cost efficient government schools.

To make that point I will use the last figures I have, which were put out by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development in 1995. Australia is below the OECD average in government spending on education. In primary schools we spend 13.4 per cent per primary student as a proportion of gross domestic product, compared with the average across the OECD countries of 17.3 per cent. Our spending in Western Australia is even lower. Western Australia through most of the 1990s - the figures I have go up to 1993-94 - spent less than the Australian average. In Western Australia we get high quality education at basement prices. Yet this Government is saying that it will take another \$141m out of education during the next four years. That means we will not have equity in education in this State.

MRS ROBERTS (Midland) [8.41 pm]: Education is one area that is dear to my heart. I believe children are our greatest resource and for the future benefit of our society we owe a lot to our children in terms of their education. The greatest priority and the greatest number of letters from families that I receive in my capacity as a member concerns education and their hopes and aspirations that their children will be able to get the kind of education that will lead to their being able to secure employment and a worthwhile position in our society.

Mr Barnett: I am sure you are quite sincere but if that is the case, why did the Labor Party not release an education policy during the last election campaign?

Mr Kobelke: We released six.

Mrs ROBERTS: As the member for Nollamara said, we released six separate documents on education.

Mr Barnett: Six press releases; that is what you did.

Mrs ROBERTS: That is not the case. Six policy documents were released. However, I ask the Minister to let me get on with the issue at hand. When I was growing up, education was a lot more equitable than it is now. There were not the disparities between schools across the metropolitan area that I see now. The standard from school to school and the facilities that were provided were similar in those days. Perhaps that was a result of standards being lower; perhaps because of some costly equipment which schools need to have now, such as computers; or perhaps because of technological change and other factors it has become a more expensive business to provide an appropriate education for children.

The difficulty is that the Government's policies do not do enough to redress some of the inequities across the State. Some children in my electorate come from families that do not have the resources at home that those in other electorates and, indeed, in other parts of my electorate have. If children do not have a computer at home, or books and other resources, or parents who are educated to the same level as those of children in other areas, they are at a distinct disadvantage. Because of that it is up to us, as members of Parliament and custodians for all people in this State, to try to give those schools extra resources to redress that situation.

I have taught in schools and I have many friends who are teachers in both school systems. I attended schools in both systems as a student. I attended a couple of different government schools and a couple of different Catholic schools. At present I find the disparity between the private school system and the government school system is increasing. The private school system provides necessary support in the education area and it does an excellent job not only in providing religious education, but also in catering for many of our migrant communities and many people from multicultural backgrounds.

Worse than the increasing inequity between private schools and government schools there is an increasing disparity between what is on offer between one government school and another. In my previous electorate I did not notice the disparity so much. My previous electorate was more affluent at the Wembley end and less so at the Osborne Park

end. It struck me that even the difference in resources in terms of what the parents could contribute to the school community was greater. At the Wembley end it was not just a matter of students coming from a more privileged or affluent background; it was that the parents came from a background where generally, at the very least, they had completed high school, and many were tertiary graduates and were working in professional areas. Many of the parents were teachers, nurses, technical and further education lecturers or doctors, lawyers or accountants, or in any one of a number of other professions.

At the other end of the electorate in Osborne Park, the story is very different. When it was thought that the local school would close, the parents there were just as dedicated to achieving outcomes for their children, but they did not have the resources to call on. If they wanted to produce material, to be in touch with the media or to lobby, they did not have the same skills and resources to draw on as a parent community as those parents at the Wembley end of the electorate. By and large these parents generally did not have an educational level beyond year 10. Statistics I have seen recently show that the educational level of a parent in many ways has a direct correlation with the level to which the child goes at school. Those children of tertiary educated people are far more likely to finish year 12 than the children of parents who did not complete high school.

Mr Barnett: That came out very clearly in the child health survey.

Mrs ROBERTS: That is right. When we are working in a system that is devolving education to the local level, we must look at what the local communities can contribute to the education of the children at the local school. There is not very much difference from school to school in terms of what parents want for their children, but being able to achieve it is an entirely different matter. It is not just a matter of affluence, or who can raise the most money at the school fete, or in which areas the most corporate sponsorship can be obtained to get additional facilities over and above the minimum requirements at schools; it is also a matter of the other parental resources upon which those schools can draw. That has an impact on the competence level of the parents to have a say in the resources that are prioritised for the school. In recent times in my new electorate, where some schools are very poorly resourced and schools are in much lower socioeconomic areas, I notice the priorities are very different.

The system of devolution that enables those schools to choose according to their local priorities is not satisfactory because it creates a great disparity in what is available at schools. I have noted that schools in lower socioeconomic areas, with the limited resources they are able to muster, are more interested in prioritising real things such as buildings or airconditioning. They are more interested in the built environment of a school. They are far less interested in putting that money towards additional teachers' aides or specialist training or in purchasing computers for the school.

It is more than passing strange that while there has been so much rhetoric about all schools being linked to the Internet by the turn of the century, in the past month I visited a school in my electorate that does not have a computer. That is a great concern to me. When Inglewood Primary School - one of the primary schools I attended - cried out that it needed local sponsorship for its airconditioning, I saw the contrast between that school and Bellevue Primary School, which is fully airconditioned because that is what parents paid for. Bellevue has no computers. It is drastically under-resourced in its library and elsewhere. However, the little money it has raised has been spent mainly on airconditioning.

It is a great concern to me that if the Government devolves too much, two standards of school will emerge. Parents at Bellevue Primary School and other schools in my electorate place a greater emphasis on the built environment and the comfort of the kids in the classroom. That same emphasis is no doubt reflected in the home as well. If a survey were conducted of students at Bellevue Primary School compared with a school in a more affluent area, it would be found that the percentage of students at that school who had a computer at home was low.

Equity in education is not about handing out money equally to all schools, but about redressing some of the inequalities that exist because of the backgrounds from which students come. The need for computers and library resources is far greater at a school like Bellevue Primary School than at a school in an affluent area whose students are more likely to have a computer, extensive books and other research facilities at home and tertiary educated parents who are able to assist them more with their studies, and who statistically are far more likely to continue at school. We must stop the children in the lower socioeconomic areas from dropping out of school. They must be provided with extra encouragement and resources. It is unacceptable that in 1997 some schools do not have those basic resources.

For the enlightenment of members I will read a brief list from correspondence from the school last year of some of the things Bellevue Primary School does not have. It does not have a school oval, a covered assembly area, a wet area for artwork, a music room, an adequate library resource centre, and a withdrawal area for students. That that situation has been able to occur is a disgrace. I am aware that the Government allocated funds for a covered assembly

area in the last Budget; however, work on that has not commenced. The school is anxious to know when that will occur.

Mr Barnett: I know you are new to that electorate. There are problems with negotiations to acquire an oval for that school. I visited the school last year.

Mrs ROBERTS: That is right - the Goodchild Oval.

Mr Barnett: The Government must do a land swap to obtain the right deal for the school.

Mrs ROBERTS: It is important that that occur soon because the children are not able to access that oval during school hours or recess and lunchtimes. Although there is an oval very close to the school, a road runs between the oval and the school and the students are not permitted to freely cross the road.

Mr Barnett: The quality of the oval that is close is not acceptable; it is a cow paddock.

Mrs ROBERTS: Yes. These kinds of matters in the government education system must be addressed so that a huge disparity is not created either between a school such as Bellevue Primary School and another state school, or between that state school and what is on offer in the private system.

The Middle Swan Primary School in Stratton has expanded beyond all expectations. At last count the school had at least five demountable classrooms, with expectations of further increases. It concerns me that there is a general perception in Stratton that that school is overcrowded. Many living in Stratton have the perception - perhaps it is a wrong perception - that their children will be disadvantaged by being sent to that government school and have felt the need to send their children to a local Catholic school instead. It should be a matter of choice between the private school system and the state system: Parents should not feel that they must be able to afford to send their children to a private school because in their opinion the local government school is substandard or overcrowded, or has any one of a number of other problems as listed by my colleague.

It concerns me that some of the schools that are poorly resourced are either expanding schools and people are sending their children elsewhere because of overcrowding there; or, alternatively, they are like Bellevue or Guildford Primary Schools - quite small school communities which do not have the resources we would like to see in government schools and from which people are moving to the private system. That disappoints me greatly.

One of the areas I will touch on is the sale and use of school assets, which the Government announced last year. It is unacceptable that the potential revenue a school can get can be determined by an accident of fate; namely, how much land a school happens to have nearby, its location and ability to rent out its school hall or other facilities, or the fact that it has some spare land that it can rent to a local business for parking or land that it considers surplus to requirements and which it can auction off. I am aware of schools that do not have those advantages and that are not in highly sought after areas where local businesses are interested in using their facilities or taking advantage of land for parking.

Another factor that concerns me is the devolution of power to schools for the hiring and firing of staff and the inequities that could result from that. With the continuation of the current policies I would hate to see schools in more affluent areas being able to offer additional incentives for teachers to teach in those areas at the expense of schools in poorer areas. There are already more than enough disincentives for teachers to want to go to schools in less affluent areas. Because of the nature of the problems in those schools, the children are far more likely to have learning difficulties and other problems which make it more difficult to teach. If members talk to any teachers across the State, the teachers will tell them that some schools are an awful lot easier to teach in than others. I taught at John Curtin Senior High School in Fremantle for some time. That was a very easy school in which to teach because there were not a lot of problems. Other schools nearby were much more difficult. Whenever teachers receive postings they have a comprehension of whether they will spend most of their time as educators or disciplinarians. It could end up as being one of the greatest areas of inequality if we proceed with any further devolution of the power to hire and fire locally.

In conclusion, the matter of equality in our schools needs to be addressed. I do not believe that current government policy is addressing it. It is widening the disparity between the government and the private systems; worse, it is widening the disparity of school versus school in the government system itself.

MS McHALE (Thornlie) [9.02 pm]: In my inaugural speech last night, almost 24 hours ago, I referred to my electorate requiring quality education. In the context of youth suicide, I also referred to strategies to improve self-esteem for all our youth. For me to stand and support the amendment follows on quite nicely from those sentiments of my inaugural speech.

I support our amendment which sounds caution over worrying trends in our education system because of state government policies, particularly in relation to equitable access to quality education. Clearly the argument we are addressing tonight requires a balance between ensuring that we meet the community demand for greater involvement in our school systems and the protection and preservation of standards of equity and access to quality education.

What I have listened to today in some new members' speeches has been quite enlightening. It confirms the view that the current government ideology is based on free enterprise - as articulated by the new member for Joondalup - and a certain notion of choice. This ideology causes great discomfort when it comes to education. This applies particularly in the current education environment which is characterised by a number of elements. We have heard recently about commercial sponsorship and the sale of school assets in order to fund improvements; the local hiring of staff by schools, which of itself is not a negative element; and the threats to the priority schools program funding. I will refer to a number of those key issues which seem to comprise the fabric of our education policy at the moment.

If I may look first at commercial sponsorship, it is of great concern to parents that schools may be forced to top up their funding somehow through corporate sponsorship and that it may be necessary to fund, not the periphery of our education system but the delivery of key education programs. We have heard recently from the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations. It expressed its disquiet that without stringent guidelines Western Australian schools may be sporting advertisements in return for cash donations from businesses. Surely this is not what we want for our schools.

Mr Barnett: Have you seen any examples of that?

Ms McHALE: I am quoting the concerns of WACSSO in its recent comments. I am not saying that I have seen it.

Mr Barnett: It is a good idea in this place to check before you quote other people. That is a bit of gratuitous advice which you will probably reject.

Ms McHALE: I thank the Minister for that gratuitous advice. I am expressing the views of the parent body. I am very happy to go back to it and return to the Minister on that point.

Through the fantastic efforts of the P & Cs the parents have already contributed thousands of dollars to our educational activities and resources. I have been a vice president of P & Cs and met with a number of district councils of P & Cs. I know of their hard work involved in raising the thousands of dollars that go into our state system. If schools have to divert resources into entrepreneurial activities, it will be an unnecessary and unacceptable use of resources. When the proposed amendments to the State Trading Concerns Act come before this House, as I understand it, they will allow sponsorship and promotion of business in schools. We will be vigorously scrutinising those amendments. I expect the Government to ensure that any policies guiding any future sponsorship, if that be the result, will have been subject to proper and full consultation with parent bodies. More importantly, before any ultimate decision is made the impact of the proposal on equitable access must be addressed.

One area of urgent need in our schools is the provision and maintenance of our quality learning environment, particularly for technology. In its 1995-96 report the Education Department stated that the high level of demand for new facilities in rapidly developing areas consumes a major proportion of capital funding and reduces the Education Department's ability to provide the major upgrading required by many schools. Imagine the deleterious effects on our students' development if schools had to fund such upgrading by corporate sponsorship.

Another issue that I want to touch upon which concerns the environment in which many of our schools are operating is the sale of school assets. On that matter the Education Department said it has adopted a strategy of selling off school assets in order to maximise its return on resources. It makes it very clear that any participation in the process is voluntary and occurs only after consultation with the school community and seeks to ensure that it will benefit the school and the agency. That is set out in the department's report. However, I understand from media reports as recently as that in *The West Australian* in February 1997, that the policy has been under a certain degree of review since June of last year. I am sure the Minister will correct me if I am wrong about my facts, but in that report the Minister conceded there was a problem with the policy because of equity.

My colleague mentioned the priority schools program. I am certainly concerned about any threats to that program as a result of the reduction of funding. Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are the focus of the priority schools program. The schools involved are identified according to a number of social and economic indices, some of which are parent occupation, income and education levels, language background and Aboriginality. If there is to be an attack on the funding of that program, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds will be affected. In 1995 over 43 000 students were enrolled in 138 PSP schools. Therefore, a significant number of students are benefitting from the program. They are not all in the metropolitan area by any means because the scheme involves 75 schools in the metropolitan area and 63 in rural and remote areas. Any reduction in funding of that program will have a significant effect on programs such as social skills development. It is the very core of what I was talking about last

night in developing the self-esteem of students and numeracy and literacy skills which are the fundamentals for students to be marketable in the labour market. The community is concerned about an economic rationalist or a free enterprise approach to education which would question the efficacy and usefulness of such programs.

This amendment allows me to alert the House to disturbing trends in retention rates. When the Labor Government was elected in 1983 it was wholeheartedly committed to increasing retention rates. The retention rates at that time were in a parlous state of about 30 per cent. They were a disgrace and in comparison with developed nations this State was very much the poor relation. Throughout the 1980s and the early 1990s there has been a constant upward trend in retention rates. In 1985 the retention rates increased to 35 per cent which was still disgraceful. In 1990 they were 45 per cent and in 1993 they actually peaked at 65 per cent. Since 1993, again according to Education Department statistics, there has been a five per cent decline in the rates. The Government may say this is due to students leaving school to join the work force, and I am sure we will hear it is caused by job opportunities and the economic boom.

Two points must be made: Firstly, I do not know whether the statistics are supported by fact and, secondly, in any event, the 1993 retention rates were nothing to be proud of at 65 per cent. For the benefit of the House, it is important to look at statistics in rural areas. The retention rate for rural students is 20 percentage points behind that of metropolitan students. If members' maths are as good as mine, the retention rate for rural students was 45 per cent in 1995.

Mr Barnett: You can finish before your allotted time.

Ms McHALE: I thank the Minister for his interjection which was timely because I am about to conclude my remarks.

I remind the House that in 1996 the Government had to defend its equity record. Its record in this area is clearly under scrutiny. A University of Western Australia survey found that children in Perth's economically depressed eastern suburbs are less likely to go on to higher education. I quote from an article in *The Australian* of 4 September 1996 as follows -

The study found schools in Perth's more depressed eastern suburbs, from Lockridge in the north to Maddington in the south, had lower TEE scores than their counterparts in the western "prosperous" belt.

Mr Barnett: Who was the author of that study?

Ms McHALE: Dr Joseph Gentilli. If the Minister allows me to conclude my comments, he can then contribute to the debate.

Mr Barnett: I would be unsure of the methodology of that study.

Ms McHALE: I am sure the Minister would be, because it does very little for his or the Government's reputation.

Mr Barnett: It has no credibility in academic circles.

Ms McHALE: The article continues -

... "some" of the students in these suburbs were as intelligent as those in more affluent suburbs. However, the report said their education was hampered by social factors including lower housing standards and higher unemployment.

The Government has already been called to account for its achievements in equitable access to quality education. As I have articulated, there are a number of worrying trends, particularly in the potential for unequal access caused by the development of commercial sponsorship and through the sale of Government assets, unless it is managed within stringent guidelines. The Opposition is watching what is happening in the Education portfolio. The community is calling the Government to account and it is for this reason that I commend the amendment.

MR OSBORNE (Bunbury) [9.15 pm]: I support the Government and the Minister. My general reaction to the debate thus far in the crushing paradox in all the Opposition has said tonight is that education is important; therefore, it is the responsibility of the Government to do something about it. If this House accepts the Opposition's argument, across Western Australia there must be hordes of parents who think the Government should do something they, the parents, do not think is important enough for them to do. That is the crushing paradox and the fundamental failure of the Opposition's proposition. It says education is important. Why do the people who the Opposition says are disadvantaged by the current system and policies not do something about it? We have heard from members opposite heart-rending tales about childhood deprivation. Many of us come from straitened circumstances and we can all tell stories of that nature. However, some of us had parents who put a high value on education and make choices and allocative decisions which will give our children opportunities.

Several members interjected.

Mr OSBORNE: This country is full of migrant families who scrimp and save to provide educational opportunities for their children because they think it is important. They do not come whingeing to the Government because the school their children attend does not have a covered assembly area, computer or this and that.

This Minister has been one of the most responsive Ministers for Education it is my pleasure to know. This Government has done very well in the education sector. I can quote example after example. The Newton Moore Senior High School, which one might call an underprivileged school, was granted \$1m for a performing arts centre. Three of the five schools that feed into that school are priority schools. The music program in that school is excellent. The Bunbury Senior High School also received \$1m for a performing arts centre, yet members opposite would say it is a disadvantaged school. This Minister and this Government have provided a top line, first class program and facility for the students of that school. An amount of \$10m was allocated to the Bunbury TAFE for a science, engineering and trade centre. An amount of \$180 000 was allocated to the Bunbury Primary School for a covered assembly area and \$50 000 was allocated to the Cooina Primary School for a parking area. In addition, an amount of \$3.5m has been allocated for a new primary school at Carey Park. These are large amounts of money.

Mr Riebling: The pork barrel came out in your electorate!

Mr OSBORNE: That is wrong because at the time these schools were in seats which were in safe Labor territory. The Carey Park school is in an area which has never been safe for the Liberal Party and in spite of that this Minister and this Government provided \$3.5m for a new primary school for that area. The Withers Primary School is another case in point. It is situated in a very deprived area yet the Minister has been to the school on three occasions and talked to the administration and parents and after each visit he came back with funding for parking and set down areas and administration responses for that school. That school is in an area members opposite would say is deprived and lacks resourcing in the government education system.

Mr Ripper: If we ever develop a situation where it was every school for itself and devil take the hindmost, would it not be the country schools which would suffer the greatest disadvantage?

Mr OSBORNE: Members opposite fail to understand that under the existing mixed system some schools will always have fewer resources than others. It is the responsibility of the Government to provide resources to the government system and to allow the private system to grow. The points raised about devolution are positive. If a system allows decisions to be made at a local level, it is a positive aspect. Most of the difficulties in schools arise from a centralised and bureaucratised system, rather than local decision making. I am not a private school zealot; in fact, I went to a more deprived school than did the member for Willagee. When I went to the Albany Senior High School the students made jokes about the people from Denmark having callouses on the backs of their hands from dragging them along the ground. They also said wheelbarrows were invented to teach the kids from Denmark to stand upright. Those are the things the kids from Lockyer Park said about the kids from Denmark.

Mr Riebeling: Have the callouses cleared up?

Mr OSBORNE: The callouses have cleared up because my parents made a commitment to my education, and I also made a personal commitment to stop complaining about the past and get on with the future. As I am not a public or private school zealot, I adopt that attitude in my role as a parent. The Government also reflects that attitude. One of my children attends a government school and two attend a private school. I made that decision based on what is best for the child. I do not have an ideological point of view about the education of my children. That is also the position of the Government.

Members of the Opposition tend to be critical of private schools but they forget that parents of children who attend private schools pay twice for their children's education. They pay for the public school system, and they also pay private school fees. To continue to take resources from the private school system and allocate them to the public school system is to tax parents of private school students again and again. The policies in Bunbury and across Western Australia have been fruitful for the students in our system. I see no examples in my electorate, about which I can speak with some authority, of the Government deliberately and on a long term basis ignoring the needs of students. When I have taken the Minister for Education to a school and explained in a rational way the disadvantages students face, he has always been more than ready to take up the cause and action has followed. Time and again the Minister has visited a school in my electorate and responded with resources and actions that have been to the benefit of those students.

This Opposition continually criticises the Government. In summary I make two points: The Government is trying to operate a mixed system in which the private and public sectors exist. It will not go full score for one or the other. If parents of children in government schools are truly concerned about the educational opportunities for their

children, it is possible for them to make decisions that will give their children more advantages, without members of the Opposition continually telling the Government that the prime responsibility rests with it.

MR BARNETT (Cottesloe - Minister for Education) [9.24 pm]: I shall make some broad comments about the Education portfolio. With one or two exceptions, generally the contributions from members opposite have been sensible on an issue that should be debated in this House. When I assumed responsibility for the Education portfolio more than a year ago, I gave some thought to the principles that should be applied to it. Nothing in the past 14 months has changed my mind. The first of those principles is to strive for quality in education, and most people will agree that should be the first priority. Second, there should be equality of opportunity for all children in our school system. They should have equal access to education. Third, there should be choice of school, subject and curriculum. Finally, all students, regardless of their abilities, should be encouraged to achieve to their full potential; in other words, pursue excellence in the true sense of that expression.

In the course of last year I visited 170 schools in this State. The vast majority were schools within the government system and they included country, metropolitan, wealthy and poor schools. From that I have a good feel for the education system in all respects. However, I do not deny that I and others have something to learn about many issues. There are more than 1 100 schools in this State, of which 770 are government schools. There are approximately 250 000 students in the government school system and 90 000 in the non-government school system. Western Australia and, to a lesser extent, Queensland are the only two States with growing school populations. In other States the populations are declining, particularly those in government schools. Last year enrolments in government schools increased by 1 per cent, and in the non-government system they increased by approximately 5 per cent. Last year the State Government increased funding for education in this State by approximately 7 per cent, or an additional \$100m, making a total of more than \$1.25b.

Great emphasis is placed on commonwealth measures and how determinations in Canberra might affect schools in this State. However, to put that in context, 90 per cent of the funds provided to government schools in Western Australia is provided by the State Government. The Commonwealth Government is a relatively small player in government education and provides approximately 10 per cent of the funds. Despite what might be said by successive federal Ministers for Education, the State funds government schools. That is not as widely recognised as it should be, and often people argue about the icing on the cake and forget that the main funding is provided by the State Government.

Mr Ripper: Some of it comes from financial assistance grants from the Commonwealth.

Mr BARNETT: Yes, but 90 per cent is provided by the State Government. I refer to some of the issues raised by the member for Belmont. The phrase "equality of access to education" rolls off the tongue. We all believe in it, just as we all believe that motherhood is a good thing. There is no doubt that many children do not have equal access to education or an equal opportunity to succeed in education. That has always been the reality and I suspect it will continue to be the reality for a long time. Home, cultural and socioeconomic factors clearly impact on education, and this has been demonstrated in study after study. One need only consider Aboriginal children in this State. Although we can debate in this House equality of access to education, between 15 and 20 per cent of Aboriginal children do not even attend school. Equality of opportunity means nothing for them, and a huge task must be tackled in the area of Aboriginal education in this State. Over the past four years \$0.5b has been spent on the education of Aboriginal children, and the results do not indicate sufficient success for that expenditure. A major review and redirection of expenditure on Aboriginal education is currently taking place and it is long overdue. Sufficient money and resources are available, yet satisfactory results have not been achieved for decades with Aboriginal children. That is a priority. If I could pick any group of children it would be those children. If anyone lacks equality of access and opportunity it is that group.

Mr Ripper: I agree.

Mr BARNETT: Mention was made of retention rates. They are an important indicator of access and success within our school system. In recent years we have experienced a decline in retention rates, after a period of increase. I am concerned about that, just as everyone in the education arena is concerned. I am not sure of the reason. I do not think anyone could be sure. Generally, an improvement in the job market has an impact. We find that retention rates often fall if young people see job opportunities available. That has happened since the mid-1990s. Equally, there has been perhaps a loss of preference among young people to study at universities. The retention rates of those completing school to some extent disguise some of the important changes taking place.

One of the most important developments occurring in education is the change in the curriculum mix available in schools that provides stronger and far more varied vocational programs. Something like 17 000 vocational program places will be provided this year. I may not be accurate on the figures but an example is Kwinana Senior High School which in one year increased its retention rates into years 10 and 11 from 30 per cent to 65 per cent. That has occurred

as a result of very good leadership in the school and by providing relevant vocational programs for those young adults. That is important. I agree that retention rates are important and they are of concern, but if one considers them more carefully there is more to the story.

Ms McHale: Given that you accept it is a concern that retention rates are dropping, is there any intention to do research on school leavers?

Mr BARNETT: I am not aware of any research but I am sure that the Education Department and the academic community will do that. There have been a number of studies. I recall that in the mid 1980s an important study on retention rates was undertaken. I cannot remember who published it but it attracted a lot of attention at that time.

The theme of the contribution by at least the members for Belmont and Nollamara was that somehow this Government is neglecting government schooling. My observation is that in our first term in government we spent \$500m more on education than did the Labor Government in the preceding four years. That is a massive increase and infusion of funding that went into the government school system. One can cite all sorts of examples, such as maintenance expenditure. We inherited a \$26m backlog of scheduled maintenance that had not been undertaken during the Labor years. We have now caught up: As a comparison, in some years under Labor in the early 1990s less than \$20m was spent on school maintenance; this year we will spend just under \$50m. If members attend schools in their electorates and talk to principals they will discover that more maintenance is undertaken now than ever before in the school system. Maintenance is an ongoing problem. Something like 30 per cent of the 770 government schools are more than 50 years old and 50 per cent are more than 20 years old. We have an ageing school building environment. That is the reason I am so keen to support school amalgamations, and to replace old schools such as Carey Park with new buildings. Emphasis has been placed on the capital works program to replace many schools, often in poor socioeconomic areas but often in old areas. My electorate of Cottesloe is a wealthy and prosperous area but it has many old schools and many of them need upgrading. Therefore, it is not a problem that can be exclusively allocated to a particular socioeconomic area.

Concerns were expressed about federal funds, and suggestions made regarding federal cutbacks to priority schools programs. I share those concerns. The priority schools program has been an effective way of targeting assistance to schools in need. That issue will be discussed at the federal and state Ministers for Education meetings. However, for the moment, I do not see a major problem in the priority schools program. The enrolment benchmark adjustment is an issue of concern. I agree with the comments of the member for Belmont. I suggest that at the meeting of the federal and state Education Ministers on Friday that will be the main topic of discussion. State Education Ministers all share concern about changes that would effectively divert large amounts of money from the government school system to the non-government school system. If a child moves from the government sector to the non-government sector, on average a saving is made, but in reality if a class has one fewer child there is no saving. On a local area basis the savings are largely illusory. That will be a topic for vigorous debate on Friday.

So-called devolution, new schools, better schools policies and the rest of it have been commented on. In principle I support more authority and autonomy at the school level and at the local area level. I want to see school principals gain authority and responsibility in their schools. However, it is a matter of a school developing at its own pace, and at a pace that suits its school environment, its students and parent population.

A school environment with many socioeconomic problems may have its hands full. Devolution with extra responsibilities may not be appropriate. For many country schools where there are small numbers of staff, and for isolated schools, again devolution may not be appropriate. It will not be forced on schools in any way but it will be available. In my view schools will progressively take up more autonomy and responsibility at a rate with which they are comfortable. The key individual will be the school principal. I am not about handing over responsibility for schools to parents. When visiting 170 schools, not one parent has asked me for responsibility in making decisions in schools. I am about giving more responsibility to a local area at a regional level, and more responsibility to principals if they are ready and equipped and if the school environment suits that situation, but it will be a gradual process.

Mr Ripper: As more schools have these devolved powers and as the process develops, how will you ensure that equity of access is maintained?

Mr BARNETT: I cannot give a precise answer, but it will be over a range of matters.

Mr Ripper: Perhaps schools in disadvantaged areas will receive a larger school grant.

Mr BARNETT: We are increasing school grants. Those mechanisms exist. Part of the changes that may occur in the administration of education is that the role of the district superintendent will be enhanced. He will have responsibility for equity across schools within a manageable region; for example, in Bunbury and surrounding areas. Instead of decisions about equity and fairness being made from one end of the State to the other in a non-rational

environment there will be a sense of looking at a region of schools and the relevant issues. It is a management structure that must be tried, but I think it will work well. I accept that there is a lack of equality in many cases but I do not think a trend towards local area planning or towards more responsibility at schools will exacerbate that. I do not believe that will happen.

Comments were made by a number of speakers about various policies. I am horrified by the member for Nollamara. I continue to be horrified that he can come to the Parliament of Western Australia and talk about dirty schools. If anything can destroy the confidence of the public and parents in our school system it will be members of Parliament in public forums slinging off and describing schools as dirty. I challenge the member for Nollamara to take me to a dirty government school. We have problems with contract cleaners and day labour. We have always had those problems, and we probably always will, but we do not have dirty government schools. I reject that suggestion. It is insulting to the school system, the principals, the teachers, the students and the parents. I appeal to members opposite not to degenerate into this sort of argument. Some good contributions were made today. We should be talking about education, but let us not sling off and damage public confidence in our school system.

Computer technology is very important. We all recognise that students must have a basic skill. The ratio of one computer per 40 students is the level of funding provided by the Education Department. In reality, schools have many more computers than that. The situation varies from school to school. I concede that. Schools acquire computers in a variety of ways. They acquire computers through school grants, parents and citizens' associations and sponsorship deals. They reallocate priorities within their budgets. There are all sorts of ways.

Mr Ripper: Might that be one of the biggest areas of inequality?

Mr BARNETT: It is an area of rapid demand from parents. In last year's Budget the Government allocated \$20m over three years for computers. Among other things, that will connect everyone to the Internet. The Government has committed a further \$18m to accelerate the program. Frankly, we could spend another \$50m. The State will need to spend that sort of money as demand will continue to grow in education. The community values education more and more, therefore, the demands will continue to grow. However, we do not have unlimited funding, and things must give within the system. We must look at opportunities. For example, selling unwanted assets is important if it improves the quality of education. That is not a money raising exercise. It is easy to dismiss things like selling land or gaining corporate support or sponsorship and say that the Government is abrogating its responsibility.

Mr Ripper: Did I absolutely dismiss those things?

Mr BARNETT: No, the member for Belmont did not, but perhaps his mate from Nollamara would.

Mrs Roberts: That is unparliamentary. Are you referring to the member for Nollamara?

Mr BARNETT: Is he not the member's mate, or don't they get on?

Mrs Roberts: You refer to members in this House as members.

Mr BARNETT: He is the member for Nollamara.

Mrs Roberts: The Leader of the House called him "his mate from Nollamara". That is disrespectful.

Mr BARNETT: All right, he is precious.

Let us consider a couple of examples of the sale of land. Many schools' utilisation of land is different from what it used to be in all sorts of respects. Many schools have land beyond their requirements. I referred to one school in the member for Belmont's electorate which has 7 hectares, yet the standard for a primary school is 4 ha. That is far too much land. There is a wide area of bushland between the school and the oval. The principal, parents and teachers in this school have a real problem supervising children in such an expansive area of bushland. Through poor planning there is a bottle shop opposite the school and drinking and other behaviour takes place in the school grounds. That school principal came to me asking that I dispose of some of that land, so he could properly look after the safety of the children. There are all sorts of reasons to sell school land.

Perth Modern School is selling some land to the Western Australian Institute of Child Health Research. That is a great idea because the institute will build on the school site and integrate some of its programs and research into the school curriculum. That is improving the quality of education. Como Senior High School has a sand pit, an excavated hole at the back of the school. That school has said that it is valuable real estate that it will never have any use for and it wants to sell it and use the proceeds for facilities. It is commonsense. There have been a limited number of sales of various government property. Property in my electorate that is owned by the Education Department is worth millions of dollars; it is underutilised. As an Education Minister - if I can manage it - I would sell that land and put that money into less advantaged schools.

Mr Ripper: Into Belmont?

Mr BARNETT: Wherever. Invariably, where I have made discretionary moves in schools, it has been to help a disadvantaged school. Many members will be aware of examples of that. It is not true to say that the wealthy suburbs always have the best facilities.

Mrs Roberts: They have the best facilities at home.

Mr BARNETT: Yes, I accept that on average. Some of the best equipped schools are the newer schools. Warnbro Senior High School is an outstanding school with state of the art technology. It cost \$24m. It is brilliant, as is Ballajura Community College.

Some good points were made in the debate. It is important that we debate education. However, let us not do it in a way that denigrates our state school system. I am a product of it, and I am proud of it.

MR CARPENTER (Willagee) [9.44 pm]: I support the amendment. I am somewhat distressed that I did not have an opportunity to speak before the Minister, so he could have taken the opportunity to address the points that I might raise; someone cut me off at the pass.

I was interested in what the Minister had to say. I can usefully address two or three areas of his remarks. I also agree that it is very easy to talk about things like equality of access to education and so on. The reason is that it should be an accepted principle. However, many people are wondering whether it is an accepted principle. All parents want their children to have equality of access to education. They also want equality of access to the highest possible standard of education. It was my experience from meeting the majority of people who live in the electorate that many people no longer believe the state education system is providing them with the best possible standard.

A couple of problems emanate from that perception. In a sense it becomes a self fulfilling prophecy. If parents believe their children will not get the best possible education from the state system, they will look around for opportunities to move them elsewhere, as you, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr Osborne) indicated. The answer to that dilemma from the Minister's side of the Parliament was that parents have a choice. They do not have a choice. That is utterly ridiculous. Very few people in my electorate have a choice. They must send their children to the local school. The member for Alfred Cove will appreciate they do not have the choice. They cannot understand members in the Parliament saying that parents have the choice of sending their children to a private school if they do not like the government school.

Mr Bloffwitch: Don't they have a convent down there?

Mr CARPENTER: Not everybody wants to send their children to a Catholic school. The majority of parents do not have a choice. They must send their children to the local government school. For members opposite to sit in this place and talk about choice shows how far removed from reality they are.

Mr House: You do not have any choice in the country.

Mr CARPENTER: Precisely.

Mr Barnett: I do not think anyone on this side assumes every parent has choice.

Mr CARPENTER: I thought I heard one of the government members say that.

Mr Barnett: I also make the observation that when we consider the so-called wealthy private schools around Perth we will invariably find that the majority of parents have two incomes for the sole purpose of sending their child to that school.

Mr CARPENTER: What is the Minister trying to say?

Mr Barnett: People often make choices, not necessarily wealthy people, for both parents to work for the sole purpose of education.

Mr CARPENTER: I have the highest respect and regard for the Leader of the House in his capacity as Minister for Education, however, the Minister simply does not understand the reality of life for so many people. Many people in my electorate do not have an income above the basic social security payment, and for the Minister to sit in this place and talk about two incomes and earning another income so they can send their children to another school is utterly ridiculous. They do not have the choice; they are poor. They must send their children to the local school. Whether it is intended or not they see a decline in the standard of their local school.

The Minister asked for examples. We have heard many general points, so I will try to provide the Minister with one or two examples. The first example that might be of some use to the Minister is Melville Senior High School. This

year it is losing staff because it has lost students. Nobody seems to know why it has lost students. It does not seem to have been as a result of any demographic change. The figures I have show that a couple of years ago Melville Senior High School had 60 staff members. The following year it had 55. This year it started with 50 - I stand to be corrected but I think these figures are accurate - based on the projections of student numbers which, as the Minister will see, are tumbling. Therefore, the staff are removed - five staff members two years ago and another five this year. The student cohort was eight fewer than anticipated after the first week. The application of the staff:student ratio to the way the reduction of eight students was scattered across the school meant a potential reduction of another 4.5 teaching positions. The Education Department negotiated with the staff and the principal at Melville Senior High School who was keen to maintain, or to restore, the reputation of his school and agreed with a final position that the school would lose 3.3 staff because it had lost eight students. I wonder what perception was generated in the catchment area for the Melville Senior High School as a result of that.

The parents see the reduction of a relatively small number of students resulting in a comparatively large number of staff being lost and the potential for a considerable amount of disruption to the education of the students. That follows the previous two years of declining student and teacher numbers. The parents firmly believe something must be done to stop the decline in the number of students and, therefore, in the staff numbers at the school. They approached the Minister for Education by letter. They approached the Education Department and asked for something to be done about the matter, that a moratorium be granted on any further staff reductions. As far as I know, the latest position is that that moratorium has not been granted. Why I am not certain, but it might be because of the relatively rigid application of the formula. However, whether we like it or not, it signals to all of those parents that the Government, via the Education Department, is prepared to let the school decline.

Mr Barnett: There is a rigid formula which is being reviewed because it is too rigid. The school, through you if you like, should ask me to come to visit the school, and I will.

Mr CARPENTER: I will tell the Minister what the school did. Members of the parents and citizens' association contacted my office and asked me whether I could try to do something for them. From my recollection, we formulated a letter that was sent to the Minister, a copy of which was sent to Cheryl Vardon. I ask the Minister whether he responded to that letter.

Mr Barnett: I cannot tell you that.

Mr CARPENTER: I appreciate that. Cheryl Vardon responded in some capacity. She sent a delegate to a meeting of the students, the P & C association, some of the staff, the principal and one or two of the members of the teachers' union. This is where the concept of the moratorium was put forward. The representative from the Education Department basically told the attendees at that meeting that it was the school's problem - the school had to sell itself in the marketplace; it had to generate more interest in its business because it was in competition with other schools in the area such as Applecross Senior High School and John Curtin Senior High School.

The majority of the parents who send their children to Melville Senior High School are from Willagee. Most of the people in Willagee do not have the capacity or the time or the financial resources to try to market a school in the marketplace. It is an idiotic suggestion, and that is the sort of rubbish they are being told by departmental representatives. What possible chance do the parents from the suburb of Willagee have to get out and market a school to try to attract more students? These parents contacted the Education Department in desperation, hoping that it might help them out, and they were told to help themselves. That is what is happening in the real world of the schools in my electorate in many cases.

Mr Board: The students who attend Melville Senior High School are from many areas other than Willagee.

Mr CARPENTER: What other areas?

Mr Shave: There would be as many people coming out of the suburbs of Melville, Bicton and Applecross, as come from Willagee.

Mr CARPENTER: That is possible, but at least two primary schools in Willagee feed into it, and then there is Melville Primary School and others further afield.

Mr Shave: Because of the programs they have there, they draw from other areas.

Mr CARPENTER: What programs would they be?

Mr Shave: They have specialised organised programs.

Mr CARPENTER: What programs would they be?

Mr Shave: They have drama programs. When I was the member for that area it had specialised teachers for those programs.

Mr CARPENTER: Is the response from members on the other side that the parents have the capacity to market the school because they do not come from Willagee, they come from Alfred Cove?

Mr Shave: When you sit down, I will speak on this matter.

Mr CARPENTER: That is fair enough. My understanding about these special programs is that until a couple of years ago an academic extension program existed. The department in its wisdom decided that Melville Senior High School should not have that program and placed it somewhere else, I think at John Curtin Senior High School. Two years ago the student numbers started to tumble, and we must wonder why. The academic extension program has gone. An aeronautics program is in place; perhaps that is the one the Minister is thinking about.

The end result of all of this is that the parents with the brightest students are desperately keen to send them elsewhere. If there is an academic extension program at John Curtin High School, the parents will send their children there or they will send them to Applecross Senior High School because it is seen as a very strong school which is doing very well. If the parents have enough money, they will send their children to a private school, and I understand many have. We are then left with students who are not bright enough or lucky enough to get into the academic extension program or whose parents are not wealthy enough to send them to a private school. Some other schools in the area have specialist programs. I think Applecross Senior High School has an art and music program. Melville Senior High School is left with the aeronautics program. As I said in my maiden speech, we cannot allow the public institutions in this State, including schools, to be the domain of those who cannot afford to send their children somewhere else. That is what is happening, and it must be stopped.

Another factor that leads into this issue is the publication of the academic results at the end of the year, which I do not necessarily oppose. If the Government intends to publish the academic results -

Mr Barnett: We do not.

Mr CARPENTER: The Government accepts that the academic results are published. A responsibility goes with it.

Mr Barnett: Just to be absolutely clear for the record: Those results came out because *The West Australian* obtained them under the provisions of the freedom of information legislation.

Mr CARPENTER: I understand that, but the Government must accept that they are published. A responsibility goes with that: If a government school is showing a poor academic record, poor academic standards, the Government cannot stand back and say to parents, "You have the choice of sending your children to a school where they will do better." As I have just explained, some parents do not have the choice. The Government has the responsibility to do something about the problem at the school, wherever it is; not to stand back and say, "It is a big market; you get out there and sell yourselves; if your kids are not bright enough, too bad." Every school and every student has the right to a top quality education. That is being denied by some of these policies. The Government must act in schools where the standard is falling - and it is not doing that in enough schools. Governments must be prepared to spend money. In the short term if the Government does not spend money, savings will result; in the long term, it will create a huge cost.

Mr Barnett: It is a pity the Labor Party did not have that philosophy when it was in power. It didn't spend money on schools.

Mr CARPENTER: I understand that. I will not try to defend it. In 1982 after a considerable period of conservative rule and nationally disgraceful neglect of the human infrastructure of this State and the country, the retention rate of students in schools in this State was about 30 per cent. I think we heard tonight that by 1993 it was about 65 per cent. Before members opposite start talking about the Government not spending sufficient money on keeping schools in the right condition, they should think about the amount of money it had to spend to overcome the disgraceful neglect of the education system in this State with which parties on the government side of the Parliament left us.

Mr Barnett: It is a bit thin when you have to go back to 1982. You should stick to the 1990s.

Mr CARPENTER: What has happened with the retention rate of students in schools since the change of government in 1993? Has it increased or declined under the Minister's directorship?

Mr Barnett: Retention rates beyond year 10 have improved.

Mr CARPENTER: Has the retention rate to year 12 increased or declined?

Mr Barnett: It has declined, for more than any other reason, because of the strengthening labour market. Invariably if labour market prospects improve school retention rates decline. In a stronger economy, children leave school.

Mr CARPENTER: The Government must be prepared to spend the money. It is not appropriate to have a McDonalds' sign stuck on every school or to sell school ovals. Some schools may appear to have plenty of land, but what about the schools that do not? Firms like Coca-Cola are not lining up to provide commercial sponsorship for schools such as the Willagee, Koorilla or Coolbellup Primary Schools.

Mr Barnett: I think you will find dramatic examples of large sponsorship going to schools in some of the poorest areas of Perth.

Mr CARPENTER: I hope that happens. Commercial sponsorship and schools being required to raise more of their own finances could pave the way for their being locked into an inequitable system where some schools will suffer. That is the problem people see emerging and we should do everything we can to avoid it.

Mr Barnett: Your philosophy is based on your seeing evil in corporate entities being close to schools.

Mr CARPENTER: That is not true.

Mr Barnett: Members opposite are nervous about sponsorship. My philosophy is to get more resources into education and I will grab them from anywhere.

Mr CARPENTER: That is not my concern. The danger is that a system will be locked in where schools will be dependent on commercial sponsorship and some areas will not receive it. That will result in inequity.

Mr Barnett: So should we decline sponsorship?

Mr CARPENTER: No. The Government must guarantee that sponsorship funds will be distributed evenly. It had to move towards that position with the sale of school owned land. Other people immediately recognised what the Minister did not recognise; namely, a potential problem for schools that did not have any land to sell. The Education Department therefore had to agree that some of the money would go to less financially equipped schools.

If the Government can guarantee that corporate sponsorship will be spread equally among schools on an as needed basis, I will accept it. The creation of inequity as a result of corporate sponsorship must be avoided. As I said at the beginning of my speech we must avoid reverting to a situation where only the privileged get a good education, because the long term costs of that will be great.

MR SHAVE (Alfred Cove - Minister for Lands) [10.03 pm]: The assumption was made that private schools are better treated than public schools. I went to both a high school and a private college. My mother held three jobs and worked most of my school life to make sure that I was sent to a college. That was what my parents wanted. They came back from World War II -

Mr Pandal: Why did you swap?

Mr SHAVE: I went to a college; I was not academically inclined and the school wanted me to repeat a year. My father therefore thought it would be better if I went to a state school. Then he decided the state school teachers were not handling me in the right manner and he wanted to send me back to a college. He thought I would receive more discipline at a college which he felt I needed, although I did not necessarily agree with that.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Osborne): Will the Minister please address his remarks to the Chair. It is very difficult for Hansard to hear when his head is turned in the opposite direction, although I appreciate that his comments are an interesting aside.

Mr SHAVE: It is not often that I and the member for South Perth enjoy each other's interchange Mr Acting Speaker.

Mr Pandal: The last time we did you predicted a Liberal victory in South Perth.

Mr SHAVE: That is true. The member for South Perth predicted a different result in Alfred Cove which did not eventuate.

Mr Pandal interjected.

Mr SHAVE: His cobbles worked hard for the Independent candidate, including the member for Churchlands seated next to the member for South Perth. She was active in my area. That might have been a bonus rather than a negative for me.

Many people take the attitude that private schools receive more resources than state schools. The reality is that people pay for that level of education. I am not talking about teachers. I believe that teachers' performance at public

schools is equal to that of teachers at private schools. When I was at high school I believed that the teachers were better than those at Scotch College, many of whom were employed because they knew someone at the school. Some of the teachers at Scotch College were pretty ordinary. I hope that syndrome has changed now that I am paying \$2 000 a term for my daughters to attend St Hilda's.

Mr House: We have noticed the trend with all Scotch College boys in Parliament; there is definitely a problem.

Mr SHAVE: I have a problem with people who have the philosophical view that they should send their children to a state school because their children have a right to an education for which their parents should not pay. I disagree with people who have the capacity to pay for their children's education but who rely on the government system to educate them because they believe it should be that way.

A professional woman in my electorate telephoned me at my office. She informed me of her profession and said that her husband was highly qualified. They were upset about something that happened at the local high school where they send their children. They believed that the Government should rectify their problem. However, they pointed out that they believed the facilities were better at private colleges than at state schools. They said that they made a calculated decision to send their children to a high school.

I fundamentally object to that attitude, just as I disagree with people who believe they have a right to state housing when they have the capacity to pay for their own housing. Members sitting on that side of the House who enjoy the same income as I enjoy and who send their children to high school because they believe the system should be paying for their education are bludging off the system. They are pulling the system down.

My parents did not go to restaurants every night of the week or once a week or once a month. I think my parents went to a restaurant once a year because they believed my education was more important than their having nights out at restaurants more than once a year. People in this place talk about what the Government is not doing for the public system. We, the people in the community, are the Government, not those who sit here. The public system, whether it be housing, education, or health should be the best system that we can provide for people with taxpayer's funds. What I have a real objection to -

Mr Riebeling: Is equity.

Mr SHAVE: I do not. My father gave me nothing more than an education. When I was 18, he said, "You look after yourself now. I have fed and clothed you. I have met my responsibilities with you; they finish now." I was under no illusion. I was not very well educated because I was not studious. I did not apply myself and I did not achieve - and I probably did not have the intelligence to go to university anyway. However, when members talk about philosophies and what the system should do for everyone, we must look at ourselves. If members opposite have the view that the State owes them, they are bludging off the system. Members opposite have the money. If they believe there are better facilities in the private system, that is where they should send their children.

Mr Riebeling: Is that equity?

Mr SHAVE: That is equity to me; so the battlers can get their children into the schools and there will not be excessively large class sizes. The situation is the same with the public health system. People on salaries of \$100 000 tell me that they will not pay for private health cover because they pay the Medicare levy; that that should be enough and they will not pay twice. It is inequitable for people on large incomes to expect that they should bludge off the public health system while others hold down two jobs to send their children to private schools.

Whichever Government is in power, the three big areas of government are police, health and education. There is never enough money to provide the facilities and services for those areas. We must encourage those people in the middle who believe that the system owes them and who have the capacity to educate and provide housing for their children to reassess their philosophies. After the war many people went into state housing. Many of my former constituents believed that they had a fundamental right to housing, irrespective of their income. I do not share that view. I believe that state housing should be available for people who cannot afford to house themselves.

Mr Riebeling: That is what the rules say: The only people who have access to that system are those who cannot access the ordinary housing market.

Mr SHAVE: Does the member believe that a person with a joint income of \$140 000 should ring my office to complain about facilities?

Mr Riebeling interjected.

Mr SHAVE: The member will not let me talk to him. I will leave him out of the debate because he obviously does not have the capacity to listen.

All Governments want to provide the best public education system they can. However, people must understand that there are only limited resources. People on large incomes should put their children into the private sector and get rid of the philosophical belief that society owes them something.

The member for Willagee talked about Melville Senior High School and Willagee. I probably have a closer affinity with people in Willagee than the new member for Willagee because I have represented them for a long period. There are not many children in the Willagee area; the area comprises mainly senior citizens. Willagee Primary School is probably down to about 100 children. Students from Willagee do not comprise the majority of students at Melville Senior High School. Students at that high school come from diverse areas. Some are quite affluent. People who have the financial capacity to educate their children themselves should do so. The money that is available for education, which people think is a government obligation, should be channelled towards underprivileged children from Willagee, for example.

Opposition members have attacked the Minister for Education and said that he should provide more money. He has already pointed out the backlog the coalition Government was left with after the Labor Government left office in 1992. No-one knows that better than I do. John Curtin Senior High School was located in the safest Labor seat in Western Australia. It was represented by David Parker and Carmen Lawrence. After 10 years of Labor Government the school was falling to bits. How can members opposite come into this place now and criticise the Government over what it is providing for education? What were they doing when they were in government? They channelled their money towards their friends in the teachers' union and neglected the schools.

It is a philosophical view that we must take money off the private system and give it to the public system. We do not make the weak stronger by taking from the strong. We must encourage people who have the capacity to support themselves to do just that. We will then have the funds to protect the people who need to be supported, such as the people the member for Willagee mentioned - people in Willagee who do not have the capacity to send their children to private schools. Our public schools must be in the best condition possible to cater for those people, and this Government is endeavouring to address that issue.

MR RIEBELING (Ashburton) [10.17 pm]: I support the amendment. The member for Alfred Cove indicated that very rich people in the government system should be the example that he wishes to portray as the norm. He said also that people on incomes of \$100 000 to \$140 000 were accessing Homeswest. He was the Minister for Housing for some period. It is outrageous that he cites examples that do not exist. It is a question of equity. I am sure the current Minister for Education sees it as his task to provide a system as close as possible to allowing equity of access to education for all students in the State.

I represent the area of Burrup, which includes a number of isolated schools. I will touch on some of the problems the isolated communities experience in trying to gain equity for students in those towns. You, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr Osborne), said that people with parents who care about their children will send their children to private schools. That is an outrageous statement about parents who, for whatever reason, have their children in public schools.

Mr Barnett: He didn't say that at all.

Mr RIEBELING: In my view he indicated that. The member for Bunbury said that one of his children was in the government system and two were in the private system. Presumably, the member for Bunbury has chosen to place two of his children in the private system because he believes that it will provide them with a greater chance of success. The member appears to believe that the private system has more advantages than the government system. That in itself is proof that our system does not provide equal opportunity for students in the government and private education systems. We should work towards a system where students in both government and private schools have equity of access to education.

The Minister gave a very good speech, but he did not refer to the problems of distance education or schools in isolated areas. He might wish to respond by interjection to my questions and the issues that I highlight. I am sure that members of the National Party are aware of the problems that country children experience in education. Some of those problems may never be solved. Towns such as Tom Price and Paraburdoo, which have substantial country schools, have recently experienced major downturns in their student populations that were not predicted at the end of last year. That is no fault of the Education Department; a company decided to lay off people, so the anticipated number of students did not appear. The parents do not understand why their children are now in combined classes, which they believe are not good for them.

I am referring to primary school children. When the member for Bunbury indicated that one of his children was in the government system I assumed that that child was at primary school - I am not sure. No matter how well off they are, parents try to keep their children in the family home for as long as possible. Sending primary school children away to the private school system is a much more difficult decision for parents to make.

The high school system in isolated areas offers distance education programs, and I understand the need for them. Because of the small number of children wishing to undertake distance education units in the Paraburdoo system, the program is offered in a number of subjects. I understand that it is extremely difficult for children to succeed or excel in the distance education system unless they are a certain type of child who can work alone.

Mr Barnett: I agree: It is very tough.

Mr RIEBELING: Last year the Paraburdoo system had sufficient staff to supervise the children doing distance education units. However, this year, because of the reduction in numbers, it has not had that ability. The children undertaking those units have been placed at the back of other classes. They are expected to proceed with their study while the other classes are under way.

Mr Barnett: What age group is involved?

Mr RIEBELING: The children are in years 11 and 12, or perhaps year 10. The headmaster has assured me that he is doing everything humanly possible within the formula to accommodate these children, and I am sure that that is the case.

One of the students told me that under the system used last year the children had their own class and teacher and access to the telephone system, and the system worked relatively well. Under this new system, they cannot get the immediate attention of teachers because they are expected to work quietly at the back of the class. They also have limited access to the telephone hook-up with lecturers in the metropolitan area. That situation is causing parents a great deal of concern.

People who send their children to government schools in my area care a great deal about their children's future. In fact, if the education system is not seen to be producing, the parents not only do not send their children to the private system but also they quit their jobs and move to an area that offers a better education system. Families are so committed to their children's future that that is a frequent occurrence. I do not know of any parent who would not do everything possible to ensure that their children succeed.

Mr Barnett: It is a tragedy that so many people give up careers and leave the Pilbara region for a better secondary education for their children. I intend to do something about that.

Mr RIEBELING: I am very pleased to hear the Minister say that.

I am very concerned about a problem in the Pilbara that leads to insecurity within the community. I am sure the Minister is aware of the difficulty these towns experience in retaining teachers. I raise this issue because retaining good teachers enhances the ability to provide quality education. The last thing a town wants to see is a good teacher leaving because the available housing is substandard. That is a real problem in many towns in the Pilbara. That sort of insecurity does not provide equity of access to our students. Devolution of authority inevitably leads to the deterioration of country schools, and those schools will then have more problems attracting and retaining quality teachers.

I congratulate the Minister on the provision of computer equipment at a number of schools in the Pilbara. Schools in my electorate do not have the problems experienced in some metropolitan areas - access to computer systems within the Pilbara is exceptionally good. One of the reasons may well be that the average income in the Pilbara is among the highest in Australia. The blue-collar workers in my electorate are not poverty stricken; in fact, they are relatively well off. It is always good to see blue-collar workers in my electorate driving their \$80 000 four-wheel drive vehicles and towing their \$80 000 boats. They work very hard.

Mr Barnett: That is one of the reasons so many decided to vote Liberal at the last election.

Mr RIEBELING: That is a possibility. A number of these people are well off and have incomes that allow them to send their children to "better" education facilities. Education facilities should be the same anywhere in the State, as the Government has an obligation to provide equity in education.

Mr Board: In a philosophical sense, why would somebody pay heavy school fees to send his or her child to an independent school if there were no advantage in it whatsoever?

Mr RIEBELING: They do not. That is part of the argument.

Mr Board: You're saying there should be equity in schools, be they private or public.

Mr RIEBELING: The problem is that brains are not distributed according to parents' income. I do not see it as a burden on our community to invest in education; in fact, it represents a good investment in the State. If a person

whose parents earn \$20 000 a year attends a school which does not have the same resources as the school of Billy Bloggs whose parents earn \$150 000, it does not mean that there is comparable brain power of those people.

Mr Board: That is not what we are saying.

Mr RIEBELING: Access to quality education should be delivered on the basis of equality. Basically, the brain power of people is not delivered to the suburbs -

Mr Board: We are not talking about delivery of education. There are many reasons that people go to the independent schools. A lot of it has to do with discipline in schools.

Mr RIEBELING: I suppose one could argue about bringing the cane back into the government system, but -

Mr Board: It has nothing to do with the cane.

Mr RIEBELING: All my children have been through the government system, and I am exceptionally happy with that schooling. The Karratha Senior High School, in the biggest centre in my electorate, is very well resourced. My son has two trades - he is an electrician and an instrument fitter - and earns in excess of \$70 000 a year on the Burrup peninsular.

Mr Board: I think our state schools are excellent.

Mr RIEBELING: Yes. I am not concerned about my situation; I am concerned about communities with poorly resourced schools, because that impacts on the children's ability to move through the system to university to become an asset for the State.

Mr Board: If you look at the schools which achieve very high TEE scores, as published by *The West Australian*, you will find the top scores are achieved by state schools, not independent schools.

Mr RIEBELING: You will find, unfortunately, that the average marks for year 12 students in the TEE results is lower in the country than the metropolitan area.

Mr Board: I am talking across the State, not country versus the city.

Mr RIEBELING: I am primarily talking about isolated areas. My electorate comprises isolated areas, and the TEE results indicate a lack of equitable access. It will cost a lot of money to correct that imbalance.

The devolution of decision making to parent bodies in schools will highlight rather than reduce that very real problem. If the Minister proceeds with further devolution, including the ability to attract investment for schools, he will create problems. For instance, parent participation at the Roebourne Primary School is unfortunately very low. If it were not for the federal special Aboriginal grant assistance, that school would be among the most deprived schools in the State. If devolution is pursued so that schools employ their teachers - the ultimate devolution - no-one will go to Roebourne. The State system which this Government inherited from the previous Labor Government - the one which some people opposite said did not work very well - guaranteed that a similar level of teacher skills would be provided at all schools, including those to which teachers do not necessarily want to go. Equity in teacher skills for all children must continue. The Minister indicated that people on this side of the House were somehow against sponsorship.

Mr Barnett: It is big potential in your electorate, and that of the member for Kalgoorlie.

Mr RIEBELING: It would have potential at certain schools. Companies such as Hamersley Iron Pty Ltd, Woodside Offshore Petroleum Pty Ltd and Robe River Iron Associates may invest. It would be terrific if more money were directed to the schools. However, I would have a problem if this were based on the sale of land. The sale of one million square kilometres of land in Pannawonica would not raise enough money for one building. Ovals in the metropolitan area are vastly more valuable than those in country areas.

Mr Barnett: Schools are not free to go around selling land. Parent groups and schools can make a request to the director general for a sale of land. She may agree, and I or whoever is Minister, must agree. A view is held that schools can go around flogging off land, but in many cases applications are rejected for reasons I mentioned tonight.

Mr RIEBELING: Good. I do not have a huge problem with sponsorship as long as the kids do not walk around with logos and the like on their shirts. I am sure Woodside, Hamersley and Robe would welcome the opportunity to invest in schools to ensure that people stayed in the community by making the schools a better place for the children.

The amendment emphasises the fact that inequities exist in the system. It is the Government's job to rectify them. We urge the Government to accept the amendment.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (16)

Ms Anwyl
Mr Brown
Mr Carpenter
Dr Edwards
Mr Graham
Mr Kobelke

Ms MacTiernan
Mr Marlborough
Mr McGinty
Mr McGowan
Ms McHale

Mr Riebeling
Mr Ripper
Mrs Roberts
Ms Warnock
Mr Cunningham (*Teller*)

Noes (32)

Mr Ainsworth
Mr Baker
Mr Barnett
Mr Board
Dr Constable
Mr Court
Mr Cowan
Mr Day
Mrs Edwardes
Dr Hames
Mrs Hodson-Thomas

Mrs Holmes
Mr House
Mr Johnson
Mr Kierath
Mr MacLean
Mr Marshall
Mr Masters
Mr McNee
Mr Minson
Mr Nicholls
Mr Omodei

Mrs Parker
Mr Pandal
Mr Prince
Mr Shave
Mr Sullivan
Mr Sweetman
Dr Turnbull
Mrs van de Klashorst
Mr Wiese
Mr Bloffwitch (*Teller*)

Pairs

Dr Gallop
Mr Grill
Mr Thomas

Mr Bradshaw
Mr Tubby
Mr Trenorden

Amendment thus negatived.

Motion Resumed

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mrs Roberts.

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE - ORDINARY

MR BARNETT (Cottesloe - Leader of the House) [10.41 pm]: I move -

That the House do now adjourn.

I advise members opposite that they must be prepared to speak on the Address-in-Reply.

House adjourned at 10.42 pm

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**PRINCESS MARGARET HOSPITAL - STATISTICS**

16. Dr CONSTABLE to the Minister for Health:

In each of the last five years with respect to Princess Margaret Hospital -

- (a) what was the total Federal, State and other funding for the Hospital;
- (b) what were the minimum and maximum number of beds available in each department;
- (c) what was the total number of medical, administrative and other staff;
- (d) what was the average length of stay per patient; and
- (e) what was the average patient to nurse, and patient to doctor ratio?

Mr PRINCE replied:

- (a) Government Funding for Princess Margaret Hospital (Federal and State Government).

1991/92	\$58 185 100
1992/93	\$57 840 700
1993/94	\$58 495 100
1994/95	\$62 760 300
1995/96	See note below

At the direction of the Minister for Health, Princess Margaret Hospital commenced a rationalisation of corporate and support services with King Edward Memorial Hospital with effect from 1 July 1993. This process culminated in the creation of a single legal entity called King Edward Memorial and Princess Margaret Hospitals on 1 July 1995 in place of the two separate hospitals. Government funding for 1995/96 followed this process and no separate funds were provided for Princess Margaret Hospital. The combined total budget for the two hospitals was \$124 553 900. A separate figure for Princess Margaret Hospital has therefore been estimated at \$72 323 700 based on the 1994/95 ratio of the two hospitals for 1994/95 plus adjustments for capital expenditure in 1995/96.

- (b) The average number of available beds at Princess Margaret Hospital for the years in question was as follows -

	PAEDIATRIC MEDICINE	PAEDIATRIC SURGERY	NEONATOLOGY	PSYCHIATRY	TOTAL
1991/92	Record not available				
1992/93	116.3	76.5	22.4	7.8	223.0
1993/94	134.9	64.5	23.0	8.0	230.4
1994/95	116.9	78.0	28.0	7.3	230.2
1995/96	123.1	70.3	28.0	13.4	234.8

Details relating to the minimum and maximum number of beds available for each Department are not available.

- (c) Staffing Numbers (Full-Time Equivalents)

	Medical	Administrative	Other	Total
1991/92	116.4	237.3	824.6	1 178.3
1992/93	116.4	229.3	846.8	1 192.5
1993/94	122.7	217.9	838.4	1 179.0
1994/95	126.8	231.5	827.1	1 185.4
1995/96	128.2	233.0	802.6	1 163.8

Owing to the rationalisation of corporate and support services between King Edward Memorial and Princess Margaret Hospitals outlined under question 1, a number of Departments previously located on two separate sites are now situated at one site only. This is particularly true of several Pathology Departments and some Corporate Services Departments. The figures shown above for 1995/96 reflect staff actually located at Princess Margaret Hospital rather than staff performing functions for Princess Margaret Hospital patients. For this reason, they are not directly comparable with the previous years' figures.

It should also be noted that the 1995/96 figures excluded temporary staff appointed for special projects such as major computer system implementations. This was done to ensure better comparability with previous years' figures.

(d) Average length of stay per patient

1991/92	3.28 days
1992/93	3.40 days
1993/94	3.23 days
1994/95	3.11 days
1995/96	2.95 days

(e) Staffing Ratios: The average patient to nursing/medical staff rates is a questionable statistic. It can be calculated in a number of ways and will be impacted by a number of variables, including casemix, acuity variability and the rationalisation process between the two hospitals outlined above. The figures shown below must be viewed, therefore, with extreme caution. For the purposes of this exercise, patient has been deemed to mean "inpatient".

	MEDICAL RATIO PER INPATIENT	NURSING RATIO PER INPATIENT
1991/92	134.8	35.0
1992/93	133.6	33.8
1993/94	127.5	34.2
1994/95	126.5	35.1
1995/96	140.8	41.4

The reservations outlined in question (c) above about the staffing numbers for 1995/96 will affect the data tabulated above. The 1995/96 figures are also affected by a large increase in admissions, partly due to the opening of the Psychiatric Day Hospital. This has resulted in the apparent rise in Medical and Nursing ratios shown. The ratios have been calculated on the basis of 80 per cent of staffing numbers being involved in inpatient work. This is an estimate only.

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES SUPERANNUATION SCHEME - WIDOWERS' REVERSIONARY PENSION

19. Dr CONSTABLE to the Minister representing the Minister for Finance:

- (1) Has an actuarial calculation of the potential costs of providing a widower's reversionary pension under the Government Employees Superannuation Pension Scheme been undertaken by or on behalf of the Government?
- (2) If yes to (1) above -
 - (a) when was this done;
 - (b) who did the calculations;
 - (c) what were the results;
 - (d) how were the calculations done; and
 - (e) are the calculations available for inspection?

Mr COURT replied:

The Minister for Finance has provided the following response -

- (1) Yes.
- (2) (a)-(c) Prior to February 1991, Barton Actuarial Services Pty Ltd, \$24.8m.
July 1994, Barton Actuarial Services Pty Ltd, \$38.1m.
December 1996, William M. Mercer Pty Ltd, \$14.0m.
- (d) The calculations are undertaken by applying a set of demographic (mortality) and financial (investment return, CPI, salary inflation) assumptions to the population of the pension scheme membership.
- (e) The calculations for December 1996 are available, but availability of prior calculations is dependent on advice yet to be received from the relevant actuary.

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES SUPERANNUATION SCHEME - WIDOWERS' REVERSIONARY PENSION

20. Dr CONSTABLE to the Minister representing the Minister for Finance:
- (1) Has the Government ever obtained legal advice on whether the prohibition on widowers receiving reversionary benefits, in the same manner that widows receive reversionary benefits, under the Government Employees Superannuation Pension Scheme breaches any State or Federal laws?
 - (2) If yes to (1) above -
 - (a) when was the advice provided;
 - (b) who provided the advice; and
 - (c) what conclusions were reached?

Mr COURT replied:

The Minister for Finance has provided the following reply -

- (1) Yes.
- (2) (a) 5 September 1996.
- (b) Crown Solicitor's Office.
- (c) The Crown Solicitor's Office provided advice to the Government Employees Superannuation Board on this issue in relation to complaints of discrimination under the Commonwealth's Sex Discrimination Act 1984 and concluded that "there is a good prospect that the option to transfer from the pension fund which was given on two occasions satisfies the requirements of section 41B and that therefore the operation of the pension fund in respect of the complainants is lawful".

This opinion was upheld in the decision of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission dated 20 December 1996 in relation to the complaints.

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES SUPERANNUATION SCHEME - REVERSIONARY PENSIONS

21. Dr CONSTABLE to the Minister representing the Minister for Finance:
- (1) What were the original reasons for distinguishing between male and female superannuants with respect to reversionary pensions provided under the Government Employees Superannuation Pension Scheme when it was established?
 - (2) What are the current reasons for distinguishing between male and female superannuants with respect to reversionary pensions provided under the Government Employees Superannuation Pension Scheme?

Mr COURT replied:

The Minister for Finance has provided the following response -

- (1) At the time the pension scheme was introduced in 1939, females were required to resign from the Public Service when they married and accordingly payments of pensions to married women and subsequent reversionary pensions to widowers were not contemplated in the scheme design.
- (2) Reasons for maintaining the distinction include -
Cost to Government: The State meets over 90 per cent of the funding costs of the pension scheme.

Equity considerations in relation to the treatment of current members and former members who transferred to the lump sum scheme.

Equity considerations in the treatment of current female contributors and current female pensioners in relation to increases in member contribution rates.

Equity considerations in the cost/benefit impact on married female contributors and non-married female contributors in relation to increases in member contribution rates.

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES SUPERANNUATION SCHEME - CONTRIBUTION:BENEFIT RATIO

22. Dr CONSTABLE to the Minister representing the Minister for Finance:

What is the average contribution to benefit ratio of -

- (a) male; and
- (b) female,

members of the Government Employees Superannuation Pension Scheme over its lifetime?

Mr COURT replied:

The Minister for Finance has provided the following response -

The actuarial basis upon which the basic benefit structure in the pension scheme was designed requires female and male members to meet the same contribution to benefit ratios. However, the contribution to benefit ratio for individual members on retirement may vary considerably depending on a number of factors such as -

The member's age at retirement

The member's elected retirement age for contribution purposes

Whether the member chooses to commute the fund share of their pension entitlement to a lump sum

Changes in the Perth CPI after their retirement date

The duration of the pension and any reversionary pension if payable.

Males also make additional contributions for automatic reversionary cover. Females do not make additional contributions for their more limited reversionary cover.

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES SUPERANNUATION SCHEME - COMMONWEALTH AND STATE SCHEMES

23. Dr CONSTABLE to the Minister representing the Minister for Finance:

Under Government Employees Superannuation Schemes in other Australian States and the Commonwealth, are widowers entitled to a reversionary pension, and, if so, under what conditions?

Mr COURT replied:

The Minister for Finance has provided the following response -

The Government Employees Superannuation Board has advised that all other comparable state and commonwealth public sector schemes provide reversionary pensions to widowers on the same basis as paid to widows.

DEPUTY PREMIER - PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES

27. Dr CONSTABLE to the Deputy Premier; Minister for Commerce and Trade; Regional Development; Small Business:

What is the name of each committee, board, tribunal and all other similar bodies within the Deputy Premier's portfolios?

Mr COWAN replied:

The following boards and committees are ministerially appointed -

Commerce and Trade:

Technology and Industry Advisory Council
State Funding Advisory Committee

Western Australian AusIndustry Committee
Coogee Implementation Committee
Woolscour Relocation Committee
Jervoise Bay Study Management Committee
Technology Precinct Taskforce
Meenar Advisory Group
The Food Centre of Western Australia Inc
Western Australian Trade Advisory Council

Small Business:

The Small Business Development Corporation Board.

Regional Development:

Regional Development Council
Gascoyne Development Commission
Goldfields-Esperance Development Commission
Great Southern Development Commission
Kimberley Development Commission
Mid-West Development Commission
Peel Development Commission
Pilbara Development Commission
South West Development Commission
Wheatbelt Development Commission
Rural Women's Network Advisory Committee
Regional Headworks Advisory Panel
Exmouth Development Trust Fund Advisory Group
Wittenoom Interdepartmental Committee on Wittenoom

MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRY - PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES

29. Dr CONSTABLE to the Minister for Primary Industry; Fisheries:

What is the name of each committee, board, tribunal and all other similar bodies within the Minister's portfolios?

Mr HOUSE replied:

The information sought by the member as it relates to the agriculture and fisheries agencies, will necessitate a considerable allocation of resources to list the 200 plus boards, tribunals and advisory committees that operate under my control. If the member has any specific requirement, then I would be prepared to consider that request.

MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT - PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES

36. Dr CONSTABLE to the Minister for Local Government; Disability Services:

What is the name of each committee, board, tribunal and all other similar bodies within the Minister's portfolios?

Mr OMODEI replied:

Department of Local Government -

Local Government Grants Commission
Local Government Advisory Board
Local Government Financial Management Advisory Committee
Professional Development Committee
Building Regulations Advisory Board
Municipal Building Surveyors Qualifications Committee
Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Advisory Committee
Control of Vehicles (Off Road Areas) Act Advisory Committee
Local Government (Long Service Leave) Regulations Board of Reference
Keep Australia Beautiful Council;
Albany Cemetery Board
Bunbury Cemetery Board
Chowerup Cemetery Board
Dudinanning Public Cemetery Board
Dwellingup Cemetery Board
Fremantle Cemetery Board
Geraldton Cemetery Board
Kalgoorlie Cemetery Board
Metropolitan Cemeteries Board
Nabawa Cemetery Board
South Caroling Cemetery Board
Upper Preston Cemetery Board

Disability Services Commission -

The Advisory Council for Disability Services and the Board of the Disability Services Commission are two bodies which fall within the Disability Services portfolio.

MINISTER FOR HEALTH - PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES

37. Dr CONSTABLE to the Minister for Health:

What is the name of each committee, board, tribunal and all other similar bodies within the Minister's portfolio?

Mr PRINCE replied:

Health Department of Western Australia -

Albany Health Service
 Armadale/Kelmscott Health Service Board (in process of being established)
 Anaesthetic Mortality Committee
 Animal Resources Authority
 Ashburton Health Service Board
 Augusta Health Board
 Avon Health Service Board
 Beverley District Hospital Board
 Board of Visitors - Bentley Hospital
 Board of Visitors - Bentley Lodge (closed)
 Board of Visitors - Fremantle Hospital
 Board of Visitors - Graylands Hospital
 Board of Visitors - Heathcote Hospital
 Board of Visitors - La Salle Hospital
 Board of Visitors - Lemnos Hospital
 Board of Visitors - Milgray House (Albany)
 Board of Visitors - Mills St Centre
 Boards of Approved Psychiatric Hostels - Group 1
 Boards of Approved Psychiatric Hostels - Group 2
 Boards of Approved Psychiatric Hostels - Group 3
 Boddington District Hospital Board
 Boyup Brook Health Service Board
 Bridgetown District Hospital Board
 Brookton District Health Service Board
 Bruce Rock Memorial Hospital Board
 Bunbury Health Service Board
 Busselton Health Board
 Central West Coast Advisory Committee
 Chiropractors Registration Board
 Collie Health Service Board
 Corrigin District Hospital Board
 Cunderdin District Hospital Board
 Dalwallinu District Hospital Board
 Dental Board of WA
 Dental Charges Committee
 Dental Prosthetists Advisory Committee
 Dongara Health Service Board
 Donnybrook/Balingup Health Service Board
 Drug Advisory Committee
 Dumbleyung District Memorial Hospital Board
 Dundas Health Service Board
 Esperance Health Service Board
 Fluoridation of Public Water Supplies Advisory Committee
 Food Advisory Committee
 Fremantle Hospital and Health Service Board
 Gascoyne Health Service Board
 Geraldton Health Service Board
 Gnowangerup District Hospital Board
 Goomalling Health Service Board
 Harvey District Hospital Board
 Jerramungup Hospital Board
 Kalamunda Health Service Board
 Kalgoorlie/Boulder Health Service Board
 Katanning Health Service Board
 Kellerberrin Memorial Hospital Board
 King Edward Memorial and Princess Margaret Hospitals Board
 Kojonup District Hospital Board
 Kondinin District Hospital Board
 Kukerin Nursing Post Board
 Kununoppin and Districts Hospital Board

Lake Grace and Districts Health Service Board
 Laverton and Leonora Health Service Board
 Local Health Authorities Analytical Committee
 Lower North Metropolitan Health Service
 Margaret River Health Board
 Maternal Mortality Committee
 Medical Board of Western Australia
 Merredin Health Service Board
 Moora District Hospital Board
 Morawa and Districts Health Service Board
 Mukinbudin District Hospital Board
 Mullewa Health Service Board
 Murchison Health Service Board
 Nannup District Hospital Board
 Narembeen District Memorial Hospital Board
 Narrogin Regional Hospital Board
 North Midlands District Hospital Board
 Northampton Kalbarri Health Service Board
 Northcliffe District Hospital Board
 Nurses Board of Western Australia
 Occupational Therapists Registration Board
 Optometrists Registration Board
 Osborne Park Hospital (see Lower North Metro HS)
 PathCentre (see 'Western Australian Centre for Pathology...')
 Peel Health Services Board
 Pemberton District Hospital Board
 Perinatal and Infant Mortality Committee
 Pesticides Advisory Committee
 Pharmaceutical Council of WA
 Physiotherapists Registration Board
 Pingelly District Hospital Board
 Plantagenet District Hospital Board
 Podiatrists Registration Board
 Poisons Advisory Committee
 Psychologists Board of WA
 Quadriplegic Centre Board
 Quairading District Hospital Board
 Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre Trust
 Radiological Council
 Ravensthorpe Health Service Board
 Rottnest Island (Now under Fremantle HS)
 Royal Perth Hospital Board
 Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital Board
 Southern Cross District Hospital Board
 Swan Health Service Board
 Tambellup District Hospital Board
 Wagin Health Service Board
 Warren District Hospital Board
 Western Australian Alcohol and Drug Authority
 Western Australian Centre for Pathology and Medical Research (PathCentre)
 Western Australian Consultative Council on Alcohol
 Western Australian Health Promotion Foundation
 Western Australian Reproductive Technology Council
 Wickpin Health Service Board
 Williams Medical Centre Board
 Wongan Hills District Hospital Board
 Wyalkatchem-Koorda and Districts Hospital Board
 Yalgoo Nursing Post Board
 Yarloop Health Service Board

Healthway -

Western Australian Health Promotion Foundation (Healthway)

Alcohol and Drug Authority

Western Australian Alcohol and Drug Authority Board

GOVERNMENT PROPERTY - SALE

58. Dr CONSTABLE to the Minister for Local Government; Disability Services:

(1) In relation to all real estate (land and buildings) sold within the Minister's portfolios in the 1995-96 and 1996-97 financial years -

- (a) where was the real estate situated (giving the actual address of the land and building);
 - (b) for what amount was the real estate sold;
 - (c) when, if ever, was the most recent valuation of the real estate conducted; and
 - (d) what was the value of the real estate according to the valuation?
- (2) What real estate within the Minister's portfolios is currently for sale or in the process of being sold?

Mr OMODEI replied:

Department of Local Government:

- (1) No real estate was sold in the 1995/96 and 1996/97 financial years.
- (2) No real estate is currently for sale or in the process of being sold.

Disability Services Commission:

- | | | | | | |
|-----|-----|--|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| (1) | (a) | Vacant Land
West Swan Rd
Caversham | 13 Dawlish Way
Warnbro | Vacant land
Kanimbla Way
Morley | Vacant land
flood plain
adj to Bennet
Brook Eden Hill
\$460 000 |
| | (b) | \$180 000 | \$112 000 | \$43 000 | |
| | (c) | 25 Aug 96 | April 1996 | 26 Sept 1996 | Min of Planning
valuation mid 1996 |
| | (d) | \$140 000 -
\$190 000 | \$128 000 | \$43 000-
\$46 000 | \$450 000-
\$460 000 |
- (2) Bradford Hostel, 35 Kenton Way Calista
Nulsen Haven, 462 Great Eastern Highway Redcliffe
Cromane, 44 Halliday Street Bayswater

HOSPITALS - WOODSIDE MATERNITY

Admissions

116. Mr THOMAS to the Minister for Health:

- (1) How many -
 - (a) obstetric; and
 - (b) gynaecological admissions,
 were there at the Woodside Maternity Hospital in the -
 - (i) 1994/95;
 - (ii) 1995/96; and
 - (iii) 1996/97,
 financial years?
- (2) How many of each of the above patients resided in localities included in the -
 - (a) 6163;
 - (b) 6164;
 - (c) 6166;
 - (d) 6149; and
 - (e) 6150,
 postcodes?
- (3) How many of the patients in each of the categories resided in the -
 - (a) City of Cockburn;
 - (b) Town of East Fremantle;
 - (c) City of Fremantle; and
 - (d) City of Melville?

Mr PRINCE replied:

ADMISSIONS	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97 (YTD)
OBSTETRIC	1275	1202	731
GYNAECOLOGICAL	754	645	340
POSTCODE 6163			
OBSTETRIC	320	302	192
GYNAECOLOGICAL	182	136	55
6164			
OBSTETRIC	163	152	117
GYNAECOLOGICAL	59	53	32
6166			
OBSTETRIC	54	35	24
GYNAECOLOGICAL	29	22	10
6149			
OBSTETRIC	24	16	15
GYNAECOLOGICAL	14	10	7
6150			
OBSTETRIC	20	20	14
GYNAECOLOGICAL	10	11	4
CITY OF COCKBURN			
OBSTETRIC	475	410	294
GYNAECOLOGICAL	211	177	87
TOWN OF EAST FREMANTLE			
OBSTETRIC	33	28	19
GYNAECOLOGICAL	8	5	3
CITY OF FREMANTLE			
OBSTETRIC	92	134	80
GYNAECOLOGICAL	61	64	14
CITY OF MELVILLE			

OBSTETRIC	236	221	120
GYNAECOLOGICAL	128	74	30

HOSPITALS - INTERPRETER AND TRANSLATOR SERVICE

129. Ms WARNOCK to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Which public hospitals -
 - (a) in the metropolitan area; and
 - (b) in country and regional areas,
 have their own internal translator and interpreter service?
- (2) Which other hospitals will establish the services?
- (3) When will this take place?
- (4) What selection criteria are used for selecting individuals to be part of this service?
- (5) What quality control measures are in place for the service?
- (6) Are those who are accredited to undertake interpreting and translating tasks provided with regular professional training to maintain standards?
- (7) Who provides this training?

Mr PRINCE replied:

- (1) (a) In the metropolitan area Princess Margaret Hospital and King Edward Memorial Hospital, which are administered jointly, have directly contracted interpreters in some high demand languages. Other interpreters are supplied from the Translating and Interpreting Service. PMH and KEMH use the translation service supplied by the Health Department of Western Australia's Multicultural Access Unit, as do other WA hospitals. (Interpreting usually refers to the transmission to the written conversion of one language to another.) Fremantle Hospital has one part time staff interpreter.
 - (b) No country or regional hospitals have their own interpreting services. Hospitals other than PMH/KEMH use interpreters supplied by the Translating and Interpreting Service, which is run by the Commonwealth Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs.
- (2)-(3) It is anticipated that Royal Perth Hospital will directly contract at least some of its own interpreters, starting later this year.
- (4)-(6) In the case of PMH/KEMH, contracts have professional development clauses requiring an accreditation at professional or paraprofessional level from the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters. The clauses also require the interpreter to have undertaken, or to undertake the Health Interpreting Certificate Course, the Mental Health Interpreting Course, and the Legal Interpreting Course. Many TIS interpreters have also undertaken or will undertake these courses, which are held each year. So far 114 interpreters have graduated from the Health Interpreting Certificate Course and 31 from the Mental Health Interpreting Course.
- (7) The two health interpreting training courses are provided by the Central Metropolitan College of TAFE, and designed and coordinated by the Health Department's Multicultural Access Unit in conjunction with TIS and TAFE interpreting lecturers.

DISABILITY SERVICES COMMISSION - PYRTON

142. Mr BROWN to the Minister for Disability Services:

- (1) Has the Disability Services Commission commenced planning to move some Pyrtton residents into the care of non-Government agencies?

- (2) Did the Commission undertake a tender process in which agencies were invited to present proposals for accommodation services?
- (3) Have a number of agencies been chosen to provide accommodation services for Pyrton residents?
- (4) What are the names of the agencies chosen?
- (5) What criteria were used to select the agencies?
- (6) Did some social trainers or groups of social trainers employed by the Commission submit a tender for accommodation services?
- (7) On what basis -
 - (a) was the tender; or
 - (b) were the tenders; rejected?
- (8) Does the Commission intend to require successful tenderers to offer Pyrton staff employment opportunities?
- (9) Will the Commission ensure that any positions offered to existing staff -
 - (a) maintain or improve the weekly wage;
 - (b) maintain or improve existing employment conditions; and
 - (c) not increase the ordinary number of hours in the working week?
- (10) Will the Commission ensure the total value of any employment contract offered by any of the successful tenderers is equivalent to or better than the total value of the employment contracts under which staff are currently employed?
- (11) Have any of the successful tenderers stipulated that staff will be employed under workplace agreements?
- (12) Does the Board of the Disability Services Commission intend to allow successful tenderers to stipulate to existing DSC staff that a pre-condition for them obtaining employment is they enter into a workplace agreement?

Mr OMODEI replied:

- (1)-(2) Yes.
- (3) A number of agencies have been elected as "preferred providers" and have now entered a state of negotiation with the Disability Services Commission to determine the number of services and the level of funding for these services.
- (4) Care in the Community
Catholic Care
Hills Community Support Group
- (5)
 - (a) Capacity to manage both financial and human resources which focus on the residents' needs.
 - (i) an organisational structure that identifies who is responsible for the budget management, and how the structure will support the service
 - (ii) proposed staff mix
 - (iii) staff development and supervisory structure and model.
 - (b) Capacity to plan the service and to be able to measure the agency's performance against service objectives, individual objectives and Disability Service Standards.
 - (c) Demonstrated ability to describe the concept and the implementation of safeguard for -
 - (i) best practice for individual development
 - (ii) individual planning
 - (iii) consumer participation

- (iv) continuity of service provision
 - (v) ongoing support, development and maintenance of appropriate participation in employment and alternative to employment programs.
 - (d) Ability to commence the service within the prescribed time frame.
 - (e) Compliance with the principles of the DSC policy on charging fees.
 - (f) Willingness to negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding with DSC.
 - (g) Willingness to sign a Performance Agreement with DSC.
 - (h) Compliance with a commitment to the principles and objectives in the Disability Services Act 1993 and the Disability Services Standards.
 - (i) Performance of the agency in current and/or Performance Agreements with the DSC.
- (6)-(7) This information remains confidential as part of the tender process.
- (8) No.
- (9) The conditions of employment will be at the discretion of the non-Government agency.
- (10) As DSC will not be requiring agencies to make offers of employment to Pyrtton staff it will not be stipulating conditions of employment.
- (11) No.
- (12) As DSC will not be requiring agencies to make offers of employment to Pyrtton staff it will not be stipulating conditions of employment.

SCHOOLS - COORDINATED HEALTH POLICY

145. Mr BROWN to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Does the Government intend to implement a coordinated health policy in schools?
- (2) What steps have been taken to implement the policy?
- (3) When will the coordinated policy be implemented?

Mr PRINCE replied:

- (1)-(3) The Government has implemented a program model for health that focuses on three key dimensions of the health system. These are -

Health conditions - for example, cancer; cardiovascular; mental health; pregnancy and newborn, etc;

Populations - for example, Aboriginal people, the aged, children and young people, women, men, etc; and

Levels of intervention - for example, promotion and prevention; diagnosis and treatment; and continuing care.

This framework will enable planning and management of health services' outputs to take better account of the needs of specific groups in the population such as school aged children. As part of this work a comprehensive review of state funded primary health services to schools is proposed for completion by late 1997. This review will guide the future development of school health. It will take account of existing research such as the recently released WA Child Health Survey on Education, Health and Competence.

ROYAL PERTH HOSPITAL - ADMISSIONS

150. Mr BROWN to the Minister for Health:

- (1) In correspondence dated 16 October 1996, did the Minister advise that Royal Perth Hospital would be examining the method of referral from the emergency department to admitting teams of the day?
- (2) Has such an examination been carried out?
- (3) What was the result of the examination?

Mr PRINCE replied:

(1)-(2) Yes.

- (3) Royal Perth Hospital policy has been changed so that once admission has been recommended by the emergency department team this can only be challenged, or reversed, by the consultant under whose care the patient has been assigned after discussion with the emergency department.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND TRADE - COOPERATIVES

Promotion

178. Mr BROWN to the Minister for Commerce and Trade:

- (1) Does the Department of Commerce and Trade promote the use of cooperatives?
(2) If so, what promotion does it conduct?
(3) If not, why not?

Mr COWAN replied:

- (1) Yes. The Department of Commerce and Trade promotes cooperatives through its local economic development programs.
(2) The Department of Commerce and Trade produces promotional literature, undertakes community facilitation and provides advice as required.
(3) Not applicable.

SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION - COOPERATIVES

Promotion

179. Mr BROWN to the Minister for Small Business:

- (1) Does the Small Business Development Corporation promote the use of cooperatives?
(2) If so, what promotion does it conduct?
(3) If not, why not?

Mr COWAN replied:

- (1) No.
(2) Not applicable.
(3) The Small Business Development Corporation includes advice on the use of cooperatives where appropriate as an optional legal structure which may assist small business development. It refers clients to the cooperative option where it is relevant rather than using broad based promotion, due to the limited scope for take up by the majority of clients.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

EAST PERTH REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY - CHAIRMAN

21. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister for Planning:

Is the Minister proposing to appoint controversial former Planning Minister Richard Lewis as chairman of the East Perth Redevelopment Authority?

Mr KIERATH replied:

I have not appointed Richard Lewis as chairman of the East Perth Redevelopment Authority. I must admit he would make an admirable chairman.

POLICE CHASES - OFF ROAD CIRCUITS

22. Mrs van de KLASHORST to the Minister for Police:

In light of constant community concern about high speed police chases, and admissions of boredom sometimes from young offenders when asked why they offend -

- (1) Has any consideration been given by police to arranging such activities on off road circuits such as race tracks?
- (2) If yes, what was considered, what was acted upon, what was implemented and what has not been implemented?
- (3) If no consideration has been given, will the Minister ask the Commissioner of Police to consider such activity as a means of diverting these young offenders from the public streets to speed tracks, where they can perhaps eliminate the desire for speed from their system?

Mr DAY replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1)-(3) Without doubt this is a matter of significant public concern. It is a complex problem with many causes, some of which are related to the use of drugs, amphetamines and other illicit substances, a background of dysfunctional family life, a lack of parental skills and, as the member said, general boredom. I am not convinced that off road race tracks would provide an instant solution, because it is a matter of some complexity. The Commissioner of Police advises that the policy in respect of police pursuits is under review, and that the results of the review, with the exception of some of the more detailed operational matters, will be made public in the near future.

I am happy to refer the member's suggestion to the Commissioner of Police. Currently discussions are under way between senior police officers and representatives of various organisations, including the Aboriginal community, to see what opportunities can be provided for offenders involved in such pursuits. I am happy to pass on the member's comments. Not all high speed pursuits are the result of the initiation of a chase. In many cases their high speed activity comes to the notice of police, who are then involved in a pursuit. It is not necessarily the case that the high speed activity starts only after they have been pursued by police.

ALINTAGAS - KINGSTREAM PROJECT

*Joint Venture Bid***23. Dr GALLOP to the Premier:**

- (1) Has AlintaGas submitted a joint venture bid with Epic Energy to supply gas to the Kingstream project?
- (2) Was this bid approved by Cabinet contrary to the advice of Treasury - as reported by John McGlue in *The West Australian*?
- (3) Will the Premier table the Treasury advice and other relevant documents so that the people of Western Australia can judge whether he or the Under Treasurer is right when \$500m of taxpayers' money is at stake?

Mr COURT replied:

- (1)-(3) I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. It would be more appropriate to direct the question to the Minister for Resources Development. I have not been involved in Cabinet discussions on the Kingstream project. I do not have a conflict of interest in the Kingstream project. However, my brother is the chairman of the company, so it was decided that I would not participate in those discussions. It is true that the Treasury has a representative on the committee which is overseeing the sale of the pipeline. That committee comprises six representatives, three from AlintaGas, one from Treasury, one from the Department of Resources Development, and one from the Office of Energy. That group is overseeing, and will make recommendations to the Government on, the sale of the pipeline. I am not trying to cop out of answering the question. I have left the matter with the Minister for Resources Development and the Deputy Premier, who have been chairing those issues in Cabinet.

The issue of how the Government will handle the question of AlintaGas either expanding its capacity on the pipeline or another consortium building a second pipeline has taken up a lot of our time. It is not quite as simple as has been portrayed in the newspaper. The deregulation of the gas market is a terrific challenge.

We now have companies competing with each other to provide more competitive energy to the south of the State. I suggest the Leader of the Opposition ask questions on specific matters to the responsible Minister.

TRADES AND LABOR COUNCIL - EMPLOYERS

Breaches of Criminal Code - Prosecution Threat

24. Mr BLOFFWITCH to the Minister for Labour Relations:

On the radio yesterday morning Trades and Labor Council Secretary Tony Cooke suggested the possibility of employers being charged under the Criminal Code. Are there many precedents for such action?

Mr KIERATH replied:

I found it fascinating that Tony Cooke should say that he would retaliate by charging employers for breaches of the Criminal Code. Anybody who breaches the Criminal Code should be charged. It does not matter whether they are employees, employers, members of the general public, former Premiers, or Ministers; if someone breaches the Criminal Code, he should be charged.

The Building and Construction Industry Task Force has charged a former manager of a large construction company. It has also charged company officials under various sections of the Industrial Relations Act because, in the task force's opinion, they had broken the law. The TLC is trying to turn that around by claiming that the task force is anti-union when, as I outlined, it has also prosecuted and laid charges against management. It is fair to say that in industrial relations terms it is the first time in about 10 years a law has been applied equally to all, regardless of whether they are employers or employees - anybody who breaks the law will be punished.

Another assertion was made that the task force's prosecutions have failed. That is totally false. In fact, only one case has been lost so far. Most of the prosecutions have been in the Industrial Magistrate's Court. For a criminal offence, such as extortion, fraud or threats to gain a personal benefit, it will involve the criminal justice system. It is irrelevant if the action happens at work. If people are guilty of a criminal offence, they should be dealt with by the criminal justice system, unless the Trades and Labor Council and the Opposition are saying that extortion and threats are okay if they are done at work, and I am sure they would not be saying that. If any union officials find employees breaking the law, they have a duty to report the employees, and I will support the union official. However, I will not support employers and unions who force employees or contractors to obey unfair demands simply for the privilege of going to work.

ALINTAGAS - KINGSTREAM PROJECT

Joint Venture Bid

25. Dr GALLOP to the Deputy Premier:

Following the answer by the Premier to my earlier question, which indicated that the Deputy Premier was in the chair in relation to issues pertaining to the Kingstream project, I ask -

- (1) Has AlintaGas submitted a joint venture bid with Epic Energy to supply gas to the Kingstream project?
- (2) Was this bid approved by Cabinet contrary to the advice of Treasury as reported by John McGlue in *The West Australian*?
- (3) Will the Deputy Premier table the Treasury advice and other relevant documents so that the people of Western Australia can judge whether he or the Under Treasurer is right when \$500m of taxpayers' money is at stake?

Mr COWAN replied:

- (1)-(3) The only thing to come before Cabinet is the proposal by Kingstream Resources NL to establish a steel mill in the mid-west region. With respect to that proposal there is undoubtedly some negotiation with a gas supplier, but there has not been any stipulated arrangement, as the Leader of the Opposition has just outlined and as reported. There is a requirement for the proponent to engage in the securing of a gas supplier and a process is involved in that. I do not like to disappoint the Leader of the Opposition, but no requirement has been put down that says that it shall be done by AlintaGas. I have no doubt AlintaGas has submitted a bid. The decision about whether it is the best and preferred supplier ultimately will be made by Kingstream Resources.

Dr Gallop: Are you absolutely certain this matter has not been to Cabinet?

Mr COWAN: I am absolutely certain there has been no approval by Cabinet for that issue as a separate Cabinet discussion. I repeat: The proponent, Kingstream Resources, is required to undertake to have gas supplied to it and the agreement contains conditions relating to that, but there is no specific Cabinet approval, as the Leader of the Opposition has outlined, for AlintaGas to be the -

Dr Gallop: Joint venture partner to supply gas.

Mr COWAN: Nothing has come before Cabinet to indicate AlintaGas will supply gas. I understand the proponents are required to enter into negotiations with AlintaGas, but nothing has come forward that says that AlintaGas has secured the contract.

Dr Gallop interjected.

Mr COWAN: As with all Cabinet documents, I am not prepared to table Cabinet advice on the agreement between the Government and Kingstream Resources, and that is all that has come before Cabinet.

NATIVE TITLE - PRIMARY PRODUCERS

Legal Aid

26. Mr TRENORDEN to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

- (1) Have any primary producers received legal aid in their defence of native title?
- (2) Have any native title claims included farmers' residences?

Mr PRINCE replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question. The Attorney General has provided me with the following response -

- (1) No, although the State has assisted in the defence of one property in Carnarvon.
- (2) Yes.

POLICE SERVICE - BUDGET CUT

27. Mrs ROBERTS to the Minister for Police:

I refer to the revised estimates released by the Under Treasurer on 18 November last year which show a real reduction in police funding of \$123.8m over four years and ask -

- (1) Does the Minister stand by the estimates and will he accept cuts of \$123.8m to the Police Service budget?
- (2) Has the Minister prepared any Cabinet submission outlining areas within the Police Service where he proposes to cut \$123.8m?
- (3) Does he seriously believe that increased crime and decreased public safety will not directly result from reduction in police funding of \$123.8m?

Mr DAY replied:

- (1)-(3) Forward estimates are exactly that. I do not expect that there will be cuts of anything like \$123.8m in the Police budget.

Mrs Roberts: Over four years?

Mr DAY: Whether it be over four years or any other period. Over the past four years - under the previous Police Minister - the budget for the Police Service in this State increased from \$240m a year in 1992-93 to about \$370m a year for 1996-97. That is a 50 per cent increase in four years, well above the rate of inflation. The Police Service has been extremely well funded under this Government. A number of new police stations are being built and opened. They are being provided with up-to-date equipment. A commitment has been given by this Government that a new police academy will be built in this term of government.

Mrs Roberts interjected.

Mr DAY: That demonstrates clearly that we are doing an excellent job by adequately resourcing the Police Service and are doing much more than was done over the previous 10 years of the Labor Government. Cuts of \$123.8m over the next four years will not occur.

GERALDTON REGIONAL HOSPITAL - DIALYSIS MACHINES

28. Mr BLOFFWITCH to the Minister for Health:

A dialysis machine has been installed in the Geraldton Regional Hospital. However, it takes the place of only home dialysis machines. Is there any prospect of Geraldton Regional Hospital being provided with a machine which will allow all people who need renal treatment to be able to receive it in Geraldton?

Mr PRINCE replied:

I commend the member for his persistent advocacy on the part of his electorate on this matter. He has frequently brought it to my attention and that of my predecessors. The result is that dialysis equipment has been installed in the Geraldton Regional Hospital and the staff are being trained in its operation.

The member for Geraldton makes the valid point that a number of types of dialysis equipment are required to treat various forms of renal problems. The equipment to which he refers is in relatively small supply because it is not needed by many people. Almost all the machines in service are in the major teaching hospitals in Perth such as Sir Charles Gardiner and Royal Perth. A new unit will be operating in Fremantle soon.

I undertake to examine whether additional equipment can be installed in the Geraldton hospital. However, only a small handful of patients would need to use it. The question is whether not only equipment but also highly trained staff can be found to operate in Geraldton for what will be a relatively small number of people. This will involve an examination of areas further north and to the hinterland of Geraldton where it may well be that people travel to and from the metropolitan area who could be better treated by travelling only to Geraldton. I will look into the matter.

REGISTER OF ENCUMBERED VEHICLES - ACCURACY OF INFORMATION

29. Mr BROWN to the Minister for Fair Trading:

On 7 March I wrote to the Minister about a motor vehicle dealer who purchased a vehicle after being told by the Ministry of Fair Trading that it was not subject to any financial encumbrances and who subsequently discovered that money was owing on it.

- (1) Will the Minister assure the House that the Register of Encumbered Vehicles provides accurate information that protects all consumers from purchasing vehicles that have an outstanding debt?
- (2) How does the Minister explain the fact that a Bayswater motor company stands to lose thousands of dollars because of an apparent failure of the REVS system?

Mr SHAVE replied:

- (1)-(2) I recollect that the member wrote to me on this issue. I receive many inquiries on issues such as this. I do not have the precise details in front of me; however, I will endeavour to get the details for the member and answer him accordingly.

TAXIS - SECURITY MEASURES

30. Mrs van de KLASHORST to the Premier representing the Minister for Transport:

Taxi drivers in Swan Hills have a growing concern about the increase in violent crime against taxi drivers. Will the Minister consider new security measures such as the installation of perspex screens, which are used in places such as London, Stockholm and Beijing?

Mr COURT replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question. The response I have received from the Minister for Transport is as follows. The issue of safety screens in taxis has been considered on many occasions. The most recent was last year's government convened taxi industry summit when the issue was thoroughly canvassed. Differing opinions exist in the taxi industry about screens and their effect on the operation of the car and the comfort and safety of the taxi operators and passengers. It was decided at the summit, where the majority of participants were taxi drivers and owners, that security screens were not the most appropriate security measure for taxis. The summit recommended that the preferred method of security in taxis would be surveillance cameras and the Government endorses this recommendation. An amount of \$1m of industry funds has been set aside to assist in the installation of the cameras. Nevertheless, subject to normal vehicle safety standards, screens may still be installed in taxis if that is the preference of individual owners.

Mrs Roberts: Are you aware that the tender process was abandoned?

Mr COURT: Tenders for the supply and installation of the cameras have been called and are currently being evaluated. I am advised that the evaluation committee, which comprises joint government and taxi industry representatives, should announce the successful tenderer by the end of this month. The Government is confident that the use of these cameras in taxis will see a big improvement in the behaviour of taxi users who feel they can flout the law. As I understand it, these cameras will take footage when people get into a taxi, when they pay the fare, and when they leave a taxi. There is some difficulty with the use of the cameras while the cars are moving. A lot of work has gone into getting workable designs. This is one way the Government hopes to arrest a problem that is causing us great concern.

Mrs Roberts: Last year taxi drivers said they wanted fare evasion legislation as well as a means of protection.

Mr COURT: I have been asked a question about security cameras and screens and I have answered that. If the member for Midland asks me a question, I will get an answer for her.

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES - BUDGET CUTS

31. Ms ANWYL to the Minister for Family and Children's Services:

I refer to the revised forward estimates released by the Under Treasurer on 18 November last year which show a real reduction in funding for Family and Children's Services of \$27.2m over four years.

- (1) Does the Minister stand by the forward estimates and will she accept cuts of \$27.2m to the Family and Children's Services budget?
- (2) Has the Minister prepared any Cabinet submission outlining the areas within her portfolio where she proposes to cut \$27.2m?
- (3) Does she seriously believe that her decision to cut \$27.2m from the Family and Children's Services budget will not have a devastating effect on Western Australian families?

Mrs PARKER replied:

I thank the member for the question. Perhaps I should have paid more attention to the answer given by the Minister for Police, because this is very similar to a question asked of him. Members opposite could be a little more original.

- (1)-(3) The budget for my portfolio and those of all other portfolios are presently part of the negotiation process. As Minister, I have made representations to the Under Treasurer and the Treasurer on the budgetary requirements for my department.

Mr Ripper: You disagree with the forward estimates.

Mrs PARKER: No, but as Minister responsible I ensure that we have a budget that will meet the needs of Western Australian families as adequately as we can. The issue relates not only to the amount of money we have but also to how we spend and prioritise it. I am pleased with what is happening.

FEDERAL FUEL LEVY - ROAD FUNDING

32. Mr TRENORDEN to the Premier representing the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Since 1993 has the Federal Government increased its fuel levies?
- (2) If so, by how much?
- (3) Has the Federal Government increased road funding to Western Australia? If not, has it decreased funding?
- (4) What are the expected results for road funding allocated to Western Australia in the next federal Budget?

Mr COURT replied:

The Minister for Transport has supplied the following response -

- (1) Yes.
- (2) The federal excise on petrol has increased nine times since July 1993, with increases totalling 10.64¢ a litre for leaded petrol and 8.4¢ for unleaded petrol and diesel. The most recent increase was implemented on 1 February 1997, when the excise rates increased by 0.14¢ a litre for leaded petrol, unleaded petrol and diesel. Current federal excise rates are 36.87¢ a litre for leaded petrol and 34.70¢ for unleaded petrol and diesel.

- (3)-(4) Federal road funding allocations to Western Australia declined from \$171.5m in 1995-96 to \$164.8m in 1996-97. The federal nationwide allocation for roads in 1995-96 was \$1 608m and \$1 638m in 1996-97. The road funding allocation for Western Australia in the 1997-98 federal Budget will not be known until that Budget is brought down. In 1996-97 only \$62.04m was allocated for national highways. The Government hopes that for 1997-98 this allocation will increase substantially, bearing in mind that this part of the road system requires \$130m per annum. The Minister for Transport is continuing his direct approaches to the federal Minister for Transport to increase funding for the national highway and for roads of national importance. The Minister for Transport will insist that Western Australia's allocation is increased.

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE - FORWARD ESTIMATES

33. Dr GALLOP to the Treasurer:

- (1) Is it not the case that the forward estimates measure the current range of government programs projected into the future?
- (2) This being the case, unless there is an increased forecast for revenue for the State, any increase in programs can come only at the expense of other programs or through an increase in debt incurred by the State. Is it not therefore the case that, if there are no changes in the Government's projections on revenue, the increases being forecast by the two Ministers earlier today can be achieved only with cuts in other areas of government expenditure?

Mr COURT replied:

- (1)-(2) The forward estimates are based on the Government's being able to maintain adequately the current level of services.

Dr Gallop: That is what I said.

Mr COURT: The Leader of the Opposition cannot understand the forward estimates. He assumes that everything must be done in the next few years as it is done today.

The other part of the forward estimates are the overall allocations - these are separate from the figures quoted by the Leader of the Opposition - which allow for matters such as overall wage increases and so on. Members opposite cannot come to grips with living within one's means; it is as simple as that. When in government, to provide the same level of service members opposite just borrowed and spent more and more money. They did not worry about the efficiency side of the equation.

KWINANA FREEWAY - EXTENSION

34. Mr NICHOLLS to the Premier representing the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Is the extension of the Kwinana Freeway south from Thomas Road to Mandurah seen as a priority by the Government?
- (2) What avenues or alternatives would allow the time frame for the extension of the freeway south to be brought forward?
- (3) What is the current estimated cost of building the freeway extension from Thomas Road to Mandurah?
- (4) What are the current vehicle trips each day on the Mitchell Freeway to the city?
- (5) What are the current vehicle trips each day on the Mitchell Freeway from Ocean Reef Road to the city?

Mr COURT replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question. An answer was provided by the Minister for Transport but I do not seem to have it with me. My apologies. If the member places the question on notice, I will ensure the answer is provided.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AUTHORITY - ANNUAL REPORT RELEASE

Delay

35. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister for the Environment:

I refer to the Environmental Protection Authority's call for more power and money in its annual report tabled yesterday. Given that the report was transmitted on 31 October 1996, is it not the case that the Government

deliberately withheld the tabling of the report in the lead-up to the State election because it knew it would cause embarrassment?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

Not to my knowledge.

The SPEAKER: Order! In concluding questions without notice, I indicate that 15 questions were asked.
