



**PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

## **INAUGURAL SPEECH**



**Hon Frank Hough, MLC**  
(Agricultural Region)

**Address-in-Reply Debate**

**Legislative Council, Wednesday 30 May 2001**

*Reprinted from Hansard*



# Legislative Council

Wednesday, 30 May 2001

---

## Inaugural Speech

**Hon Frank Hough, MLC**

**(Agricultural Region)**

---

### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

*Motion*

### OPENING STATEMENT

**HON FRANK HOUGH** (Agricultural Region) [8.18 pm]: Mr President, I congratulate you on your appointment, and also Hon George Cash for his appointment as the Chairman of Committees. Mr President, before I start my speech I call on you to use the powers of your position to ensure that I am granted the same rights as all members in this House to deliver my maiden speech uninterrupted. I have the right as a democratically elected member to walk through the front door of this Parliament without being physically threatened and manhandled. I demand my right and those of my colleagues to safely enter this Parliament. This is a democracy, not an ochlocracy.

### WELCOME

Let me begin my maiden speech by congratulating not only the new members of Parliament, but also the people of Western Australia who have placed us here to act on their behalf. It is an honour and a privilege to represent the interests of my constituents and, hopefully, to have a direct impact on shaping a better future for generations to follow. May my presence here be a constant reminder to all members assembled that the average people, like me, whom we represent - the men, women, children, and ordinary working people - have placed their desire for a safe, equitable, environmentally sound and prosperous future firmly in our hands. It shows the democracy of our system that an ordinary person like me is able to become a representative of the people.

### MY HISTORY AND COMMITMENT

It is no secret that the people have lost faith in and respect for politicians and the process of government. In fact, I would go as far as to say that I am here as a direct result of their disillusionment. People who voted for me have indicated a lack of faith in established parties, policies and bureaucratic red tape.

A point of interest, which I feel is statistically quite unusual, is the emergence of a strong political voice from what some people may call an insignificant country town. My younger days and the founding of my early character took place in Doodlakine - commonly known as Doodlie. For those folk who do not know where Doodlakine is, it is about 12 kilometres from Kellerberrin in the wheatbelt. From this tiny, little-known community, with a population of about 150 people, came the ex-federal Labor senator, Peter Walsh; our current Minister for Agriculture, Hon Kim Chance; Hon Jim Scott from the Greens (WA); and yours truly. It may have been the great country lifestyle,

or perhaps it was something in the Doodlakine water. Please do not refer to us as the three honourable Doodlies.

My lead-up to becoming a parliamentarian was my early days in the building trade, followed by a role as a multinational marketing manager with a large company. I went into business 25 years ago as a motor vehicle dealer with Honda and BMW, and in later years as an inquiry agent-cum-private investigator. I also had a stint as a member on the Commercial Tribunal. I am also a justice of the peace, and in 1974 I was appointed a commissioner for declarations by a previous President of the House, Hon Clive Griffiths.

I must assert to the misinformed and misguided people, who are in the minority, that I am not a racist. I find that those people who have accused me of this are either acting on a hidden agenda on behalf of unscrupulous persons or perhaps they are poorly educated and badly misinformed. I find their accusations highly offensive and derogatory. It demonstrates their ignorance.

#### SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

I take this opportunity to thank our leader, Pauline Hanson. Whether or not people agree with our policies, they must admit that she personifies the grassroots revolt against the entrenched establishment. One Nation is a political party that some people have seen fit to promote as a group of right-wing revolutionaries. This could not be further from the truth. We represent Australian people who are proud of their nation and their flag, and want to protect it. We have a growing voice and we are definitely here to stay.

Pauline Hanson has suffered here in Western Australia and nationally at the hands of the media. It is a well-publicised fact that within days of her initial victory, a complaint of racial discrimination was lodged with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. This can be attributed directly to an article *The Australian* newspaper ran, which took selective quotes in an interview out of context. The media feeding frenzy that surrounded those proceedings and the subsequent bandwagon on which many jumped were nowhere to be seen when, after what can only be described as a deliberately drawn-out period of some 18 months, Commissioner Sir Ronald Wilson found that Pauline Hanson's comments about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were taken out of context in the entire interview; they did not constitute racial discrimination as defined by the Act. For 18 months this woman suffered direct discrimination because of false reporting and a delay in official vindication. Nobody even said sorry. I quote, in part, from the proceedings. In his conclusion, Sir Ronald Wilson stated -

I hope that it will be understood - particularly by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples - that I am required to decide this case on a strictly legal basis. It is not a question whether or not I agree with the political views which I have found the respondent to be expressing in her interview with the journalist from *The Australian*. I appreciate that the complainants and many other members of the community may find them misguided, unwarranted and offensive, but that does not mean that giving expression to them as part of a political statement was an unlawful act contrary to s.9(1) or any other section of the Act.

In the light of my careful consideration of all that the respondent said in the interview she gave on the morning after her election, I find positively that her words are not capable of constituting an act involving a distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin which had the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of any human right or fundamental freedom in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.

Sir Ronald Wilson finally said -

I have no option but to dismiss the complaints. . .

If one examines the total context of the decision and takes note of Sir Ronald's personal view and his positive dislike of Pauline evident in his statements, the miscarriage of justice is obvious. I will remind him that his view is inconsequential. He is a disgrace to the judicial system and should be reminded what he is being paid for. Sir Ronald is a spineless creature with an ulterior motive - a hidden agenda driven by one of the major parties to take so long to make a simple, straightforward decision. I say to him, "Shame on you, Sir Ronald. Why don't you approach Pauline and say sorry, the word you helped to invent because of your time at Sister Kate's Home."

Pauline Hanson has been spat on and subjected to numerous threats, and has been the recipient of torrents of racial abuse from these minority groups. What is their agenda? Is it to destabilise our system and to create unrest while placing the blame on One Nation? I witnessed this when I initially saw her speak in Perth. Protesters, who were seconded through advertisements in student magazines, hurled abuse and missiles. When I saw Pauline maintain her dignity and pride under this assault, I thought, "Here is a woman with guts and with the courage to stand up and fight for the convictions of the ordinary Australian." It was obvious. It is something that impressed me and drew me to One Nation.

#### **IN APPRECIATION**

Most importantly, I take this opportunity to sincerely thank the people of the agricultural regions who voted for me. I confirm that I am here to do the job for them. The people who stood by me during the campaign gave me their time and their emotional and financial support, manning polling booths, scrutinising and campaigning. The words "thank you" are not enough. May my future actions reflect my genuine concern for and commitment to them. Again, may I record my gratitude to Pauline, who gave up one month of her time to help me during the six-month lead-up to 10 February. The results showed the effect of her presence and influence here in the west.

#### **A THANKYOU TO MY FAMILY**

My last thankyou before I address the rural and regional issues is to my wife, Jan; my children, Carl, Pauline, Gina, Angie, Garth and Dean; my five beautiful grandkids - I will not name them because I will probably forget one and I will get into trouble; and my extended family and friends. Their love, support, loyalty and faith lend strength to my convictions and inspiration to the duty of this position.

I say from the outset that I will give credit where credit is due. I will not oppose anything if it is not warranted. However, I will vigorously criticise anything that is not in the interest of Western Australia and the people of the agricultural regions.

#### **AGRICULTURAL REGIONS' CONTRIBUTION**

Western Australia now accounts for 28 per cent of Australia's exports. It is a major world source of a wide range of commodities and is expanding rapidly in the manufacturing and service sectors. Covering 2.5 million square kilometres, Western Australia has a population of 1.8 million and a highly educated work force of some 850 000 people.

Agriculture is second only to minerals as the major contributor to Western Australia's export income. Farm-gate production is worth about \$4.5 billion a year and is growing. This export-dominated sector is also one of the State's largest industry employers. About 55 000 people are employed directly on the land, with many more employed by associated industries. A report commissioned by the Regional Development Council found that 72 per cent of our State's population lives in the Perth metropolitan area, with an increasing trend of centralisation within our population.

I call on the Gallop Government to help put life back into our regional and rural areas by initiating the decentralisation of our government departments. This would effectively break through the

boundary that has been drawn around Perth. The Government should not forget our farming communities.

#### **ARE FARMERS A DYING BREED?**

Concern for the increasing number of endangered species in this country is well documented. Take, for example, the bilby. Time and money have been spent, and may I say successfully, for its protection. However, I believe the major endangered species is the farmers and country folk in small rural communities. If we do not take heed of the warning signals, we will succeed in making all of them extinct, never to be seen again, just like the Tasmanian tiger.

In 1966, Australia had 290 000 farmers. Now there are about 100 000 or less, and they are leaving the land at a rate of 35 a week. This means that 60 per cent of the Australian farms which existed in 1960 have been destroyed by market forces, assisted by deliberate government policy. It appears that country people do not equate to city people any more. There is no vision for a future and the Government is not interested in protecting the interests of Western Australia's primary producers. The heinous octopus - affectionately known as the multinationals - has all but destroyed rural and regional Australia. It is imploding into a black hole from where there is no escape. The multinationals have effectively done what no fire, flood or drought has been capable of doing since Federation. Hell-bent on profits, they have forsaken their moral and social obligations. This, my friends, is called globalisation, with buzz words such as micro and macro reform and, of course, deregulation. I have too much respect for this House to use the terminology that would appropriately describe those vultures.

#### **GLOBALISATION - "THE CURSE ON THE BUSH"**

Small businesses in rural and regional areas have continually faced predatory pricing by large retail chains. Major grocery retailers in the United Kingdom control 45 per cent of the retail market; in the United States, 21 per cent; in Japan, 17 per cent; but in Australia they control a whopping 80 per cent. This figure has doubled in the past 20 years, suggesting that the big three business chains have bought out \$1 billion worth of small businesses and independent retailers in the past three years alone. This concentration of market power has the capacity to distort competitive forces, enabling non-competitive practices such as price discrimination to exist, with national supply contracts offered which do not reflect real costs in each State.

Prohibited trade practices include anticompetitive agreements such as price fixing, market sharing and primary and secondary boycotts as referred to in sections 45 to 45D of the Trade Practices Act. Predatory pricing is an attempt by a firm with a substantial share of the market to cut its prices in order to force competitors out of the market or to deter potential market entrants. However, small businesses in rural and regional areas are reluctant to seek litigated relief from these practices. Rural and regional people are demoralised at having had a Government and agencies that have failed to defend their interests. The national competition policy has been presented as a real and bitter pill. Issue No 13 of the National Competition Council's newsletter raised serious concerns for people in the bush. It stated that the NCP reforms have the potential to aggravate the loss of services such as banking and petrol. Concerns have been raised that water reforms will raise the price of water, especially for irrigation, and that will impose pain on farming communities.

The legislation review process, under the auspices of the national competition principles agreement, was endorsed by all members of the Council of Australian Governments in April 1995. Under those principles, statutory regulation which restricts competition can be justified only if it can be demonstrated that net benefits are to be gained by the public. It is unfortunate that the basis of that decision appears to be profit driven, not people driven. As the council acknowledges, many agencies did not know how to apply the public interest test. The principles of economic rationalism drive the national competition policy. It has been said that the two main arms of economic rationalism are deregulation and privatisation. Deregulation has been seen at its worst in the Western Australian dairy industry. The end result of deregulation of the dairy industry has been

more hardship for dairy farmers, higher prices for the average family and more profits for the processors and grocery chains.

An inquiry under part 3 of the Productivity Commission Act 1998 to assess the economic and social effects of the national competition policy on rural and regional Australia had as a guiding principle for the legislation review program that the legislation should not restrict competition unless the benefits to the community as a whole could be shown to outweigh the costs. The costs - I ask members to put a price on the lives of our State's dairy farmers and their families.

#### **DEREGULATION - "DEATH AND DECIMATION"**

When I joined One Nation, I met a dairy farmer and his wife, Syd and Jeanie Mitting. They were among my greatest supporters, and helped me and the party campaign for three years. Syd walked the streets of Brunswick, Harvey, Pinjarra and Waroona and, despite his age, 75, and three heart bypass operations, he was a proud Aussie dairy farmer. His main fear was that of deregulation of his livelihood. Syd's driving force despite his health problems was his love for Pauline Hanson and One Nation and his ambition to see One Nation's members elected to Parliament in Western Australia. Sadly, when deregulation was introduced on 17 July 2000 - which effectively gave Syd 22c a litre for his milk when his costs of production were 26c a litre, a net loss of 4c a litre - this process initiated a slow degeneration to bankruptcy for Syd and signalled the loss of his farm, which represented his superannuation. Within one month of deregulation, Syd became sick as a direct reaction to stress and worry for the survival of his family. Syd's ambitions were obliterated on Australia Day, 26 January 2001, on his forty-ninth wedding anniversary, seven months after the introduction of deregulation. Syd's life ended on that fateful day, 15 days short of seeing One Nation's members elected to this Parliament. That is only one example of the tragedy that is the reality of those mindless decisions made in the name of profits. Our primary producers are suffering and so are their families. The way of life and peace of mind for Syd and thousands of other people in their latter years has been destroyed.

#### **THE NATIONAL COMPETITION POLICY**

The national competition policy proclaims that state sovereignty is a fundamental component of the NCP package. However, it states that important legislative reviews, such as the review of the dairy industry, will be weighed in terms of costs and benefits for the national interests, and this could lead to adjustment costs in the home State but greater overall benefits in other States. In practice, state sovereignty always appears to be subservient to a nebulous and poorly defined ideal called "national interest". I can assure members that a farmer in Lake Grace will have a vastly different view of what constitutes national interest compared with someone in Canberra who is isolated from the economic impact of these policies. One of the major sources of contention between States and the federal Government is that different views of the national interest exist. A one-size-fits-all mentality in the application of the NCP is impossible.

The deregulation of the electricity, gas and telecommunications industries has led to huge gains for big business while smaller business operators, particularly rural ones, have lost their livelihoods, homes, essential services, self-esteem and ultimately their faith in our process of government. It does not stop there. Wait, members, there is more to follow. We will see the deregulation of newsagencies, chemists and the liquor industry, all of which are the cornerstones of small, rural communities. Strict adherence to free markets was commented on by Karl Marx, who made the connection that free markets would act to increase social unrest and lead to such deprivation that the class system itself would be threatened. Karl Marx said that the free trade system is destructive. It breaks up old nationalities and pushes the antagonism of the proletariat and the bourgeois to the extreme point. In a word, the free trade system hastens the social revolution. It was in this revolutionary sense that he voted in favour of free trade.

Although privatisation is not a stated objective of the NCP, politicians in all States have raised the NCP in defence of their inevitable progression to privatisation. Clearly, the publicly-owned

monopolies are the target of the NCP. These public enterprises and the natural monopolies they control are owned by the Australian people, the same people the national competition policy argues will benefit through reform. One need look only at the current dividend of around \$2 billion that the Reserve Bank of Australia handed to the federal Government.

#### **WE NEED A COUNTY BANK**

According to statistics from the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority, there were 206 banking branches in Western Australia outside the metropolitan area in 1995. Figures for 2000 indicate that only 157 of those services remain; that is, almost 50 banks have pulled out of the State's regional and rural communities. Many Western Australians in my electorate want a better service and more branches from the banks and, more importantly, Western Australian ownership. People do not mind paying bank fees if they know the profits are being put back into their own communities. That is why we need to put some effort into having a locally-owned bank. Our New Zealand neighbours are leading the way on this issue by instigating the establishment of a banking service with a New Zealand retail network. I quote New Zealand Post chairman Ross Armstrong, who said -

This will be a bank for all New Zealanders. It will offer a range of simple, easy to understand services that represent value for money for customers, the convenience of the Post Shop network and the benefit of being New Zealand owned.

It is forecast that within three months the new bank in New Zealand will have the largest branch network in the country and will be the only bank to offer customers the convenience of retail trading hours, and that means weekend banking. Banking has proved itself as one of this country's most successful services, so why should we not build a bank for ourselves and own it? This is about West Aussies owning Western Australian assets. I ask members to imagine it: our bank would have lower fees and more branches. If we open our own bank, overseas banks will stop closing their branches. They would not dare close a branch when a Western Australian bank branch was about to open just up the road.

#### **SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE - "BARRIERS ARE NEEDED"**

Sustainable management of our natural resources and protection from pests and diseases is crucial to the ongoing development of a profitable agricultural industry in Western Australia. Protection of Western Australian primary industry from significant pests and diseases is a priority. Strengthening quarantine, surveillance and risk management are essential as population mobility and international and interstate trade increase the risk of incursion of serious exotic plants and animal pests.

"Biosecurity" sounds like a term from the brave new world. However, it means that farmers and producers must now lobby Governments to save their industries. Biosecurity Australia carries out risk analyses on applications from foreign countries that want to dump their produce here. Our producers want zero tolerance for those risk assessments when applications are made, and so they should.

As a member of the World Trade Organisation, Australia has no choice but to succumb to the pressure of global markets and their insistent requests to take imports and primary produce. Australia's geographical isolation - once considered by many to be a hindrance - is probably a saving grace for many of our primary producers. Australian agriculture is relatively disease free, but our trading partners' produce is riddled with highly infectious diseases. Western Australia is in a unique position in that its produce is even more pristine than that grown in the eastern States. The Government's stance is to placate farmers by saying that our quarantine service can prevent exotic diseases and pests from coming into the country with our agricultural imports. Our bilateral trade agreement with New Zealand poses some concern, because it may be used as a backdoor for produce being brought into the country due to the failure of conventional methods of application. Western Australia's stone fruit industry is fighting for its life. Cherry growers are lobbying as I



speak because their livelihoods are being destroyed by brown rot. This disease somehow crossed through our stringent quarantine restrictions and now poses a very real threat to the industry. It is imperative that, as a State, we maintain effective quarantine barriers and protection strategies. If we can maintain our relative freedom from disease, pests and weeds, our agricultural industries may stand a chance in the face of increasing pressure.

#### **SALINITY - "THE CURSE"**

I often wonder whether the land degradation resulting from salinity is a master plan to boost employment by creating our own Siberian-style salt mines. We have done precious little to address this cancerous growth, which is spreading faster than the Queensland cane toad. According to the latest Water and Rivers Commission statistics, salinity has affected more than 80 per cent of the waterways in the south west of Western Australia. The problem is not new. People on the land and public officials have been watching the gradual decline of our countryside for generations.

A *Wagin Argus* article dated 1946 reports that a drain to prevent the Dumbleyung Lake from inundating a few adjacent roads and paddocks would be too costly a project to be considered. It would have to be cut from the lake to the Beaufort River, probably through the chain of lakes southward from Wagin. Such a channel would, however, drain the large area of low country at present going to salt and should prevent further salting and even reclaim some already salted country.

Sustainable agriculture is vital for the ongoing profitability of rural industries and regional communities. The coalition Government proclaimed to afford this issue the highest priority. The 2000-01 state budget allocated \$40 million to tackle salinity and protect the natural diversity of our rural infrastructure. After the sale of AlintaGas, a further \$20 million was allocated. We must ensure that the money allocated to fix the situation reaches our problem areas and is not chewed up by consultants and administration.

Previous Governments would have labelled this Australia-wide problem of salinity and land degradation as a legacy of past farming practices in rural areas. It does not take a Rhodes scholar to recognise that we have left our run a little late and that Governments have failed, first, to recognise the enormity of the problem, and, second, to implement effective strategies to combat it.

The *Countryman* dated 20 September 1956 at page 11 states -

An 11-year-old Meekatharra schoolgirl has won high praise from Agricultural officers for an illustrated essay on soil erosion. . .

"The entry showed a surprising knowledge of erosion and effects on land," said a senior officer of the Department of Agriculture.

It is sad that an 11-year-old girl saw it coming 40 years ago. Where was the vision of our officials?

#### **THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION - "A CONSULTANT'S DREAM"**

This State has a mismatch of statutes that are horizontally opposed, with various state agencies vying for kudos. The Department of Environmental Protection gives only advice - which in many instances is contrary to statutory policy. We have examples of urban encroachment on mushroom farms, poultry farms and even pig farms in rural areas. Developers come up with cute names such as "Gidgie Downs" and prostitute good rural land to city slickers who want peace and tranquillity but who are soon shattered by the reality of rural enterprise. They then ring the DEP. The statutes that apply to rural zoning allow a person to make more noise in urban areas than in rural areas. Of course, because these people are involved in rural enterprise, they can always fall back on section 17 of the noise abatement legislation and seek exemption from the department. About 18 months after they have shelled out a lot of money, they can carry on doing what they have been doing for the past 35 years.

The value of spending public money on consultants is questionable. The public perception is that consultants are paid to tell the Government what it wants to hear. In other words, one consultant seeks another's approval for the course of action already decided upon. It is not bad work if one can get it.

#### **PLANNING APPEALS - "WHERE DOES THE BUCK STOP?"**

In his speech on the opening of the first session of the thirty-sixth Parliament, His Excellency, Lieutenant General John Sanderson, AC, the Governor of Western Australia stated, under the guise of promoting an open and accountable Government, that the new Government will undertake -

... a reform of the planning appeals system including abolishing ministerial appeals ...

If it is not with the minister, where does the buck stop? More importantly, what mechanism will be put in place to assure my constituents that they can have faith in the authority, fairness and power of the minister and the elected Government?

#### **ONE VOTE, ONE VALUE**

One vote, one value is hypocrisy. The populations of Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania are more evenly spread. Western Australia is a totally different scenario; it is the exception to the rule. A one vote, one value system in the Legislative Council would have transferred seven members from country electorates to metropolitan electorates. Currently, 17 of the 34 members of this place represent three country regions. Under a one vote, one value system, we must assume that at least one country seat would disappear. Enrolment figures from 30 September 2000 show that total elector enrolment in this State was about 1.1 million. The enrolment in the 34 metropolitan seats was approximately 865 000 and enrolment in the 23 country seats was about 305 000. The average metropolitan enrolment is 25 500 per electorate, and the average country enrolment is 13 200. The quota under Labor's plan would be 20-odd thousand. With this quota, the country would be entitled to 14 seats, and the existing metropolitan areas, excluding Mandurah, would get 42 seats. At present, there are 23 country seats and 34 metropolitan seats. Conceding that a 15 per cent tolerance would raise to 15 the allocation of seats to the country, that would still be eight seats lost to regional and rural areas. Only one of those is certain to be lost from the Mandurah-Bunbury coastal strip. It is the broadacre farming areas and the mining and pastoral areas that will lose most of their representation.

The summary of this situation is that rural MPs would possibly never have the time to cover their electorate in their four-year term because of its vastness, and the metropolitan areas would have a 100 per cent increase in representation. There would be fewer members in Parliament from rural and regional areas, and fewer country members within the ranks of the political parties to voice their concerns. Our State Government would be under less pressure to consider the impact of its policies on rural and regional people. Metropolitan MLAs might have two local authorities covering their electorate. The MLA for Merredin has 19 local governments. Under Labor's policy, the seat of Merredin would have even more local authorities. I ask members again: how are the people who live in such areas supposed to have access to their representatives under this plan?

In the Mining and Pastoral Region, the Agricultural Region and those parts of the South West Region that are more remote from the metropolitan area - the districts of Albany, Stirling, Collie and Warren-Blackwood - there are currently 17 Legislative Assembly districts covering 99 per cent of the land area of Western Australia. Under Labor's proposal, this vast area would be entitled to 10 seats; so, at best, 99 per cent of the State, including the cities of Kalgoorlie, Geraldton and Albany, as well as the great bulk of farming and mining communities, would get 11 out of the 57 seats. In summary, this shows once again the Labor Party's total disregard for rural and regional Western Australia. One vote, one value in Western Australia is a mindless attempt to reduce country people's vote to a value of nothing. The Labor Party, the pariahs of one vote, one value, have in fact within their own party one vote, no value. Individual Labor Party members are told

how to vote, without allowing them to exercise their democratic right. A prime example of this is when Larry Graham was shafted by the Labor Party during his preselection.

The greatest fan of globalisation, the Australian Labor Party, should be reminded that if the United Nations were to have one vote, one value, then China and India, because of their combined populations of over two billion people, would have nearly 40 per cent of the vote. Australia would not even register - no vote, no value! I say to members: be serious. Is this fair? I think not. We have to stop and think, instead of charging towards the cliff like a team of wild horses in a self-destruct mode.

#### **ABORIGINAL ISSUES**

Members may think that the multinational octopus scenario applies only to one group. Not so. The Aboriginal industry that is flourishing in this State and elsewhere may be a squid in comparison, but there is no doubt that select members of this species know how to hide behind the ink cloud that they emit in order to escape detection when a threat to their existence is perceived. Complaints of rort after rort, misappropriation of funds and the existence of a small, powerful and elite group receiving the benefits of funding have all been well documented. I state right now that I have received numerous specific complaints of such activity directly from members of the Aboriginal community. The general consensus among these concerned members of the Aboriginal community is that not enough indigenous people are being consulted, and they feel left out of the official process that has given birth to - I use their words, not mine - an elite group of Aboriginal intellectuals whose self-interest and nepotism is ripping off the communities who desperately need some real help and representation. It seems that the majority of indigenous people are being treated like mushrooms; they are being left in the dark by their own people who make up these so-called representative bodies.

#### **NATIVE TITLE - "WHO'S MAKING THE DEALS?"**

Currently there is a move to change the constitution of the Noongar Land Council - in which I have been involved - which effectively will give all negotiation and management powers to the Western Australian Aboriginal Native Title Working Group, commonly known as WAANTANG. WAANTANG is an unofficial federation of all the land councils around the State that work on native title. WAANTANG does not currently have the authority or legal power to negotiate people's rights. This is just another example of an attempt to centralise the rights of indigenous people through an organisation of self-proclaimed representatives. The Gallop Government has reconfirmed its election commitment to negotiate a framework agreement for native title as proposed by WAANTANG. I repeat: WAANTANG does not currently have the authority or legal power to negotiate people's rights. It is just another job for the boys.

The Aboriginal representatives who have spoken to me have stated strongly the need to show accountability to the community as a whole. Ideally, there should be no need for this, because an official watchdog already exists; namely, the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations, an independent statutory office-holder appointed by the then federal Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. According to the registrar, Western Australia currently has 586 incorporated organisations, and another 101 organisations have been deregistered in this State. A spokesman at the registrar's office in Canberra stated that it receives ongoing complaints at least once a week.

#### **INDIGENOUS FUNDING - "WHERE'S THE MONEY GONE?"**

I have to question the role of the registrar in effectively enforcing compliance in relation to initiating investigations of the operations and affairs of these corporations. I cite the following typical example for the record. According to the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations, the Gnuraren Aboriginal Corporation in Busselton is currently registered and is, in his words, a great organisation, which has done exactly the right thing. How is it then that this national regulatory body does not have on its records the final report on stage 1 of the professional assistance

consultancy to the corporation, dated 7 May 1992? This confidential report details the appointment by the then commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training of a consultant to review and audit the Gnuraren Aboriginal Corporation. However, that report did not see the light of day, as it was shelved. It is no wonder! The consultant's report questions the legality of transactions involving \$110 000, the omission of those transactions in the treasury report, and numerous other discrepancies. The report recommends that an appropriate legal body, other than the Aboriginal Legal Service, further investigate all issues contained in the statements made by the person who was Gnuraren's chairperson in July 1991. Did such an investigation take place? I think not.

If this is an example, according to the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations, of a great working incorporated group, I would hate to see its example of one that is not working. This is not an isolated case of statewide dissatisfaction with the status quo as far as Aboriginal people are concerned. The mention of Strelley station, the emu farms in Wiluna and many more examples beg the question: where has all the money gone? I have a signed petition from the north of the State containing several hundred names. The registered native claimants and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission constituents in the Pilbara region are concerned about the loss of their right to negotiate - a right recognised in the Native Title Act 1993. They are concerned also about ATSIC's administration of indigenous funds, and have endorsed recommendations for investigation of documented issues affecting the Pilbara.

#### **CONCLUSION - "WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?"**

To conclude, in today's society, the norm is to be abnormal. I do not want to sound like the Reverend Fred Nile, but moral standards are in decay. It is time for us to say loud and clear: enough is enough. Crime is about the only growth industry we have, with drugs and gambling coming a close second. What a wonderful indictment of this so-called lucky country and State! In Western Australia, we can boast that over 4 000 people will sleep on the streets tonight with nowhere to call home. If being happily married for over 35 years, with a devoted family, and being a Christian who is committed to our community makes me out of touch, then so be it. I am here; and members get what they see. What they ultimately get is a member who wants our kids to have an environmentally sound and prosperous future in regional and rural areas of this State. Mr President and members, I thank you.

[Applause.]

---