



Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

THIRTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION
2013

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Thursday, 21 November 2013

Legislative Council

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THE PRESIDENT (Hon Barry House) took the chair at 10.00 am, and read prayers.

PAPERS TABLED

Papers were tabled and ordered to lie upon the table of the house.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

First Report — “2012–2013 Annual Report” — Tabling

HON ROBYN McSWEENEY (South West) [10.02 am]: I am directed to present the first report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People, “2012–2013 Annual Report”.

[See paper 1030.]

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: This annual report for the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People covers the financial year 2012–13. The committee was established for the thirty-ninth Parliament on 22 May 2013. Therefore, this report details the activities of the committee for the period from 22 May 2013 to the end of the financial year. During this period, the committee held four deliberative meetings, and received a briefing from Michelle Scott, the Commissioner for Children and Young People. During 2012–13, the committee continued to monitor and review the exercise of the functions of the commissioner. Regular briefings with the commissioner are an important part of this oversight role.

There is a statutory requirement for a review of the Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2006, and this has been carried out by the Public Sector Commissioner on behalf of the Attorney General during this year. The committee has followed the progress of the review and has sought the advice of the Attorney General as to when the outcome of the review will be available. The current committee is also in the process of reviewing a report prepared by the commissioner for the previous Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People. This report was on the issue of the sexualisation of children and young people. The committee is currently undertaking a program of briefings with experts to inform itself on some of the key contemporary issues faced by Western Australian children and young people. This will enable the committee to better fulfil its role to monitor, review and report to Parliament on the exercise of the functions of the Commissioner for Children and Young People. I commend the report to the house.

GRAIN FREIGHT NETWORK

Motion

HON KEN TRAVERS (North Metropolitan) [10.04 am] — without notice: I move —

That the Council —

- (a) condemns the Barnett government for —
 - (i) closing the Quairading to York and Trayning to Merredin rail lines; and
 - (ii) failing to upgrade the roads that will now carry the grain freight, prior to the closure of these rail lines; and
- (b) expresses its grave concern that these decisions will have significant impacts on road safety across the wheatbelt and increased congestion on metropolitan roads.

As members would be well aware, on 31 October this year, those two rail lines outlined in the motion were closed as a result of the actions of the Barnett Liberal–National government. We could go back and look at the original disastrous and hapless contract that was signed by the previous Liberal–National government back in the dying days of the Court era. We could look at the broken promises of both the Liberal and National Parties prior to the 2013 state election, when they promised to keep the tier 3 lines open. We could look at the flawed policy that was adopted back in 2010 regarding the proposal to close these rail lines and upgrade the road network to replace those rail lines. We could do all those things. They were hapless, disastrous and flawed policies. But today I want to focus on the implementation of the government’s plans. I do not accept for a moment that the policy the government adopted in 2010 was the correct policy, but I know that members on the other side do. They have constantly come into this place and argued that it is the right policy and that it is the right thing to do. If we accept that it was the right policy, let us look at whether this government has implemented in a good way the policy that it set out to implement in 2010 or whether it has completely botched it and, as a result of the

complete botching of that implementation, put at risk road safety in the wheatbelt and increased the likelihood of congestion on metropolitan roads.

Hon Darren West and I had a road trip last Friday to inspect all the roads that were identified back in 2010 as the ones that would be upgraded to replace these two rail lines. We took many pictures. I have brought along my show-and-tell pictures for members to look at today, because I think when members of this house actually see the state of the roads and the failure to do the upgrades that were promised back in 2010—in fact, many of them have not even commenced—they will be absolutely shocked and horrified, as will the people of Western Australia as they become aware of how incredibly incompetent this government has been in implementing this policy.

The first road that we drove down was the York to Quairading road. As a result of the policies of this government, at the very least, the Mawson bin will be unloaded. As we go through this, members will realise that for at least the next two years the Quairading bin will also have to be out-loaded along that road, despite the government claiming that it will be out-loaded up to Cunderdin. But I will explain in detail why that cannot occur. The first thing I want to show members is the pictures of the York—Quairading Road. This road is supposed to have had work done on it. We can see that the edges are already failing. There are major drop-offs on the side of the road. Anyone who knows about driving trucks or caravans, or even inexperienced drivers, will know that those drop-offs are very dangerous. The edging is already pulling away, and there are many areas where the widening of the seal of that road has not been taken out to the promised width.

We then arrived in Quairading. As drivers come out of the Quairading bin towards Cunderdin, they need to undertake an interesting manoeuvre and swing a truck and trailer out onto the Bruce Rock road and make a hard left turn onto the Cunderdin road. That intersection is supposed to have been upgraded. To this date, not a single skerrick of work has commenced on that upgrading; yet, supposedly, this year's harvest will be carted through that intersection.

We then drove along the Quairading—Cunderdin road to look at where the road widening has been done. I have here a picture that shows where the seal on the Quairading—Cunderdin road has been widened to the point where trees are on the road reserve. If people want to see some beautiful pictures of Mr West, I am happy to bring those into the house! With this picture, I can clearly show the trees sitting inside the road reserve. I challenge members to question how safe it is, and how long it will be before we see crosses on those trees. It is a potential disaster. A caravan, a truck or a car will end up wrapped around a tree.

I now come to the next section of road. Along the Cunderdin—Quairading road there are a number of fairly tight bends. Part of the plan was to build a new, straight road to avoid the bends. That work has not started because it requires land resumption and a range of complex design details. As I understand it, the straightening of that road will not be completed for at least the next two financial years. What does that mean? It means that the bends shown in this picture will be on a narrow road with poor edging all the way along. Eight and a half thousand truck movements, loaded with 2 000 tonnes at Quairading, will be trying to drive around those tight bends on narrow roads. It is a recipe for road safety disaster in an area that already has one of the highest road fatality rates, not just in Australia, but in the world, but this government will force trucks along that road. That is what the Barnett—Redman government is proposing for the people in the wheatbelt, an area they call their heartland that they claim to represent.

This picture is the telling one. On this section of winding road there is a culvert that Hon Darren West and I inspected. It is subject to monthly maintenance. I will show members the pictures of the culvert. The circular drain pipes, which look as though they are shaped like ovals, are not an optical illusion. Subiaco oval is rounder than these pipes. The pipes have cracks in them; we can see Darren pointing out the thickness of the cracks. Hon Darren West can tell the story about trying to put his wedding ring in a crack. My fear was that he would lose the ring.

Hon Alanna Clohesy: Can I have a look?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Hon Alanna Clohesy can share the A4 version among members behind me. That is the state of the culvert. This week we asked questions in this house of the Minister for Transport about that road and the state of the culvert. We were told, "The culvert in question is currently being monitored by the Shire of Quairading on a monthly basis for deterioration." It is being monitored on a monthly basis, but it is being monitored by Main Roads on behalf of the Shire of Quairading. Main Roads is monitoring and it is marking the state of it. The minister said he did not think it would cause any problems and he expected that the culvert would not prevent grain trucks of RAV 4 or 5 configuration using this road. I will shortly read to the house extracts of correspondence from Main Roads to the Shire of Quairading in which Main Roads recommends three options for that road. Option one is to restrict load limits to six tonnes, two is to strengthen it and three is to replace it. The second and third options will not be done because when the straight road is finished, that culvert will no longer be used, so why would they be done? The only option therefore for the Shire of Quairading will be the six-tonne limit. I do not know why the parliamentary secretary gave us the answer that he expects RAV 4 or 5 trucks to use

it when the minister's department is telling the Shire of Quairading that it should put a six-tonne limit on that road. A RAV 4 or 5 truck weighs a lot more than six tonnes. In fact, I doubt that any grain is carted on six-tonne trucks in Western Australia; it would be a highly uneconomical proposal and would make rail cartage look incredibly cheap.

That was correspondence from Main Roads to the Shire of Quairading giving those three options: a load limit, repair or strengthen the culvert or replace the culvert. There will be a six-tonne load limit on that culvert. That means that the Quairading–Cunderdin road cannot be used for transporting grain out of Quairading. What does that mean? It means grain will come along York–Quairading road and along Great Eastern Highway to either the Forrestfield or Kwinana terminals. Members for East Metropolitan Region who think that will not affect their constituents are completely wrong. Grain cannot be taken to the York bin because as the members for Agricultural Region will be well aware, there is a 44-tonne load limit on the bridge to the York bin. The York line is a narrow gauge line, not a standard gauge line. The economics of that mean that the grain should be taken straight to either the Forrestfield terminal or the Kwinana terminal. That means there will be more trucks on congested roads in the Perth metropolitan area, particularly the east and south metropolitan areas. All the city members who think they do not have to worry about this issue will be affected. Those members who love Rockingham need to understand that this will affect them. I want an explanation from the parliamentary secretary about why the government did not disclose that Main Roads had been advising the Shire of Quairading that they should be putting a six-tonne load limit on that culvert. Even if that were not the case, the road is not up to standard. This picture depicts the quality of the roads. There are large potholes creeping into the Quairading–Cunderdin road. Even the parts of road that have been repaired have bubbles and unevenness throughout. The people of Cunderdin can look forward to thousands of trucks passing their school and hospital daily thanks to the policy and the failure of the Barnett–Redman government to properly implement the policy.

We then drove along the Kellerberrin–Trayning road, which is still being worked on. This picture shows the quality of the widening that has been done. Long stretches of the road where it has been widened are already deteriorating and falling apart. The job has not been done properly. Why? The government is trying to implement this policy on the cheap. According to an answer the parliamentary secretary provided this house this week, all 15 shires had asked for sections of road to be completely rebuilt rather than widened, but the government failed to provide the money for the rebuild. It provided for only the widening and this picture shows the result of that. The roads deteriorate when low quality, cheap widening is done. It puts people's lives at risk. The roads are deteriorating. Members who care about the ratepayers in the shires of the wheatbelt should be concerned, because those ratepayers will pick up the long-term cost. The government is paying only for the maintenance cost of these roads, of which there will be many. Within five years, the government will have to spend significant sums of the budget trying to maintain those roads. That is because the Liberal–National government failed to do the job properly. It has completely botched the implementation of the policy.

We had a good chat to the Shires of Trayning and Nungarin and we looked at the Nungarin road. Members might say that this picture shows a pretty good road.

Hon Mark Lewis: That's a pretty good road.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Yes; that is the problem. I will take Hon Mark Lewis for a drive along that road. I will give the member two options: we will take him in a truck, even though Hon Darren West said he did not want to drive a truck along that road.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Take him in the back of the truck.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Yes, or we can take him in an ambulance, because at Nungarin we were told that a couple of ambulances recently had to take people with spinal injuries to Merredin. The ambulance drivers drive on the wrong side of the road for as far as they can until they see an oncoming car. Why? The widened section is so uneven that it is dangerous for the passengers in the ambulance. Hon Darren West was kind enough to point out to me that a truck driving along that road would bounce all over it because it is so uneven. It is an uneven road with trucks bouncing along. What did we see on the trip as we were going along? We saw a school bus coming the other way. The government is putting our children at risk with poorly constructed roads—thousands of trucks and school buses use those roads at the same time. That is the flawed implementation of this policy of the Barnett Liberal–National government. Government members should hang their heads in shame or the backbench members should stand up in revolt today about the state of this road.

The other road we took a drive down was the Kellerberrin–Shackleton road. Some good work is being done around Kellerberrin on a bypass outside that town. Although the answer provided to us earlier this week suggested that all the work on the road had been completed, it certainly had not been completed on Friday, when we drove along it. However, I give credit that that part of that road is clearly getting upgraded so that trucks can avoid the outskirts of Kellerberrin and go straight to the bin. What about the rest of the Kellerberrin–Shackleton road? This picture I am holding shows the state of it. Do members think that is an acceptable road? This road was supposed to be upgraded, and according to the Minister for Transport all the work required had been done. It

is a complete disgrace. It does not have the right seal, and what there is of the seal is completely falling apart and deteriorating. There are quite a few extra shots of Hon Darren West inspecting parts of that road. Yet, the government tells us that all the works on that road have been completed. What an absolute joke. I knew there were problems in the wheatbelt and I knew some of the works had not been completed, but even though I have been pursuing this issue now for three of four years, I was completely amazed at the poor quality of the roads out there. I could not believe that so much of the work that was promised has not been done, yet the rail lines have been closed. I could not believe how much of the work that had been done is already deteriorating and failing. This is not about coming to this place and trying to raise the temperature; I am genuinely concerned that we will lose lives. I do not want to come back into this place and say I told the government so and point the finger at members on the other side—no-one wants to do that in politics—but the sad reality is that lives will be lost out there. That is the key issue for me. This policy will also impact the metropolitan area, but that is around congestion, not around road safety. I just hope that members will take the time to look at these pictures. I am prepared to provide these pictures to members and to table them for the benefit of members so they can actually have a look at these roads. I hope members will do the same as Hon Darren West and I did and take the time to go out there —

Hon Col Holt: We're out there all the time.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Then why is Hon Col Holt not screaming about it? Why does Hon Col Holt not bring this issue to this house? Does he consider this acceptable?

Hon Col Holt: I will make a contribution.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: If Hon Col Holt is out there all the time, he should be absolutely condemning his government.

Hon Paul Brown: We're happy to let you rabbit on about it.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Hon Paul Brown can feel free to trivialise this debate, because his constituents will read the transcript of this debate and see how much he cares about them.

In the couple of minutes I have left, I want to make the point that there is an option. As I said at the very beginning of my speech, when this government announced the program, it said there would be \$188 million, in round terms, allocated to the rail program. According to evidence to the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, the current contract to do up all the tier 1 and tier 2 lines will come in at around \$159 million. That means that around \$29 million has not been spent, and around 75 per cent of that is commonwealth money. If we do not spend it in accordance with commonwealth requirements—it was made very clear that the requirements were for rail—that money will be lost to Western Australia, and no-one wants to see WA lose money. I urge the government to take that \$29 million and do two things. It should immediately allocate it to upgrade the Trayning and the Quairading lines to get those lines back into operation for this harvest—a harvest that will be up near record levels. It should repair those lines so they can be used for this harvest. There is no way the government will get the roads fixed, so it should get those rail lines back into operation and then make the rest of the money available to Brookfield and CBH Group to see if we can get a long-term solution for the people of the wheatbelt. That is what I would suggest. The money is there; it should be in the budget. It was promised back in 2010 and that money should now be spent. It is important for this debate, because I have referred to these photos and shown them to members, to table them.

[See paper 1031.]

HON JIM CHOWN (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary) [10.25 am]: I would like to thank Hon Ken Travers for moving this motion today. The opposition spokesman for transport is a gift that just keeps on giving in this matter as he tries to gain relevance within his own peer group and in the wheatbelt on this issue. In fact, when my leader gave me the motion at the afternoon tea break yesterday, I looked at it and I thought it could not possibly have come from Hon Ken Travers. I thought it was something that Hon Darren West had put forward, but on closer scrutiny it was the opposition spokesman for transport. Be that as it may, I will address the issue in the motion. I understand why Hon Mark McGowan has made very public statements regarding the performance of his upper house members, and about performance parameters —

Hon Kate Doust: Why don't you talk about the substance of the motion and not attack the individual?

Hon JIM CHOWN: I will speak to you, Mr President.

The PRESIDENT: Order! That is a good idea; speak to me, but also speak to the motion.

Hon JIM CHOWN: I am speaking to the motion, Mr President.

Several members interjected.

Hon JIM CHOWN: My apologies.

Hon Mark McGowan spoke about performance parameters at the Labor Party's state council meeting and stated that his upper house members were out of touch with the community. We have a very good example of that in this motion. I also thank Hon Ken Travers for his show and tell. I am sure members will be very interested in the photographs he has taken and selected from the hundreds and hundreds of kilometres of roads in Western Australia. Of course, any member can travel on any road in this state, even Forrest Highway, and find a fault that they could blow up out of all proportion and bring to the house as evidence; but we will judge that on its own merit.

There is always history in these matters, and I will go back a few years. Let us set out the parameters of the Labor Party when it was in government. Hon Ken Travers was the parliamentary secretary, my equivalent, to Hon Alannah MacTiernan, who was the Minister for Transport at the time. In 2003, the Labor government appointed the Grain Infrastructure Group. The members of that committee were the Australian Wheat Board, Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd, Department of Transport, Western Australian Local Government Association, and WestNet Rail—now Brookfield—the rail operator on the rail line. That group made recommendations to the government of the day. Page II of the 2008 Grain Infrastructure Group's report states —

Within past Grain Freight Agreements, negotiated on a commercial basis, a proportion of the infrastructure costs are deemed to be fixed and must be met irrespective of the size of the harvest.

There could well be scope, in future agreements, to negotiate a fixed cost component for all infrastructure provided (Above and Below Rail, Roads, and Storage) and require that all tonnes produced be required to contribute to these costs.

In other words, the group was looking at levying growers for every tonne of grain produced. It was going to implement a levy on growers on the grains they delivered to their bins to pay for infrastructure. This was going to be funded by the growers, who are now the victims, under a previous Labor government. That would have been implemented if this government had not won in 2008. Hon Ken Travers knows that, and he sits there quietly putting up something in regard to this particular issue and trying to score very small, irrelevant political points in this place. Page V states —

Also required would be rules of entry for new entrants and legislative support to ensure that unnecessary duplication of infrastructure is avoided.

That is talking about a monopoly; a lack of competition. Competition is something this government has pursued and will continue to pursue on behalf of Western Australian growers. At this stage, Western Australian growers are receiving a minimum of \$5 to \$10 a tonne over and above what their counterparts on the eastern seaboard receive due to competition, and that competition is ongoing.

Page VII states —

It is also recognised that coordination of the supply chain by a single coordinator with equitable access and services to all customers will minimise the supply chain costs and risk of leakage.

The Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd grain express program was challenged by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission on this very point. If this recommendation had been adopted, it would have been illegal under the competition act that the ACCC administers.

I will go further to say that the grain infrastructure report group designated a number of rail closures. I will read them out. Hon Ken Travers, the shadow spokesman for transport, is fully aware of this—if he is not fully aware he was not doing his job properly as a parliamentary secretary. The Grain Infrastructure Group, under the Labor government of the day, had no grower representative. It only had industry representatives: CBH, the rail operator, the Australian Wheat Board, the Western Australian Local Government Association and the Department of Transport. It was Hon Simon O'Brien, as the Minister for Transport, who formed the strategic grain network group, which invited grower representatives on to its committee, and which we are working under today.

I will return to the rail closures anticipated by the last Labor government. I have no doubt at all, with regard to those recommendations, that these rail lines would have been closed. They include: Katanning—Nyabing, which is not operational today; Tambellup—Gnowangerup; Newdegate—Lake Grace; Narrogin—Yealering; Kulin—Yilliminning; Bullaring—Merredin; Kondinin—Merredin Trayning—Merredin; Goomalling—McLevie; and Amery—Kalannie—Beacon. And what do we have here? Goodness me, the York to Quairading line. My goodness, hypocrisy is emanating from the other side of the house; it resounds through the walls of this place. They stand there and keep doing it time and time again. Time and time again!

This government has not levied growers; and will never levy growers for infrastructure requirements. It has spent around \$128 million upgrading roads in this particular tier 3 area, and that program continues to be rolled out and will be rolled out. The ignorance of a shadow Minister for Transport on this issue is overwhelming. I am happy to see that he has actually gone out there and had a look and spoken to some people. Hon Darren West

should know better. Obviously, he is in train with the shadow minister on this matter, hoping that he will gain some relevance in the electorate. That is the only reason I can see why he would support this motion.

Just for the information of members, with regard to the extensions on the side of the roads, it is worth noting that this is a very cost effective and suitable treatment that is often used across the road network to improve safety. In fact, it was Hon Alannah MacTiernan, when she was Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, who had Main Roads initiate this program. It was used to upgrade many kilometres of Muirs Highway in the south west of Western Australia for the logging industry when Labor was in government. The treatment was effective then, and was welcomed by local communities that used the highway.

The motion at (a) condemns the Barnett government for closing the Quairading—York and Trayning—Merredin rail lines. As everyone on this side of the house knows, Brookfield Rail is the lessee of the rail lines and it was its decision, not the government's decision. The Trayning—Merredin rail line has not had an operator for 12 months, if not longer.

Hon Ken Travers: Which line?

Hon JIM CHOWN: I might stand corrected on that point.

Further, the motion states —

- (ii) failing to upgrade the roads that will now carry the grain freight, prior to the closure of these rail lines; and
- (b) expresses its grave concern that these decisions will have significant impacts on road safety across the wheatbelt and increased congestion on metropolitan roads.

Hon Ken Travers has been in the press on this emotional subject on more than one occasion. What he does not understand, and what I would like him to think about, is that during harvest time, which we are in the middle of right now, on average 10 million tonnes is carried by road to a receival point. In a very protracted period of time, six to eight weeks, 10 million tonnes is moved by road to a receival point. That is about 100 000-plus heavy vehicle movements a day on roads throughout the area. My point is, with regard to this part of the motion, the most dangerous time for anybody to be driving in the wheatbelt is at harvest time. The heaviest traffic movement of trucks, in any given year, whether a rail line operates or not, is at harvest time, because it is the only way that grain can get from a paddock to a receival point. In the tier 3 area, since farming began, those roads have been used—and are being used today—to carry grain regardless of the \$120 million-odd of upgrades that this government has put in place. The member's emotional statements are incorrect and irresponsible and should be condemned by this house, because it is at harvest time that heavy transport is used on those roads most often; it is not when receival points are being emptied over a long period of time, which can be 12 months if not longer.

The existing rail lines, apart from the ones closed by WestNet Rail—for example, the Quairading—York line, which had a significant derailing that cost \$1 million to rectify and where the issue is a rail bridge over the Avon River—need significant upgrades. That is the real issue with that particular line. WestNet Rail and CBH are both commercial entities, and, as Hon Ken Travers knows, CBH has applied to the Economic Regulation Authority to overcome the impasse over rail access agreements. The ERA is an independent authority, and one would hope that in the course of time it will come out with recommendations as to who will have access to the lines, what the access arrangements will be and what the access fees should be on a reasonable commercial basis; and the government will look at those recommendations.

With regard to this motion, I think the house and the general public are fed up with the opposition's constant misinformation, which has emanated throughout the agricultural area. It is totally irresponsible and it is an opposition spokesperson, once again, looking for relevance so that he can say to his leader, "Here I am; I am doing my job." I think Hon Mark McGowan, the political opportunist of political opportunists, must go home every night and say to himself, "My God, what a mistake I made. Why didn't I join the Liberal Party?"

Several members interjected.

Hon JIM CHOWN: I am sure he does that when he is dealing with people such as the opposition in this place on matters of such importance as this ridiculous and juvenile motion.

Hon Ken Travers: No wonder they call you "Jim Clown"!

Hon JIM CHOWN: Mr President, you know you are winning the argument when the opposition starts to get personal; they have no other argument. We have just had a very good example of that.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! Hon Jim Chown has quite a large voice that carries —

Hon JIM CHOWN: I have a minute left, Mr President.

The PRESIDENT: Order! You do not talk over anybody in the Chair. I am just trying to say that you have a voice that carries, but if there are so many interjections that I cannot hear you properly, there is a problem.

Hon JIM CHOWN: Thank you, Mr President. As always, your advice is gratefully received by me and other members of this place. I will try to lower my voice. However, when idiocy such as this motion is presented in such an important place as the Legislative Council, I get a bit emotional. When I hear blatant lies about very important issues, I have to respond. I will leave further responsible responses to this motion to other members on this side of the house.

HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural) [10.40 am]: What a performance! I rise to speak in favour of the motion. I have something to tell Hon Jim Chown. This will come as a complete surprise to Hon Jim Chown, but the earth is not flat. I will let him think about that for a while. When he gets past that idea, we will have a talk about railway lines and road safety in the wheatbelt. Hon Jim Chown's contribution to the debate was a performance by a politician with little talent, little knowledge of his electorate and little care for his constituency; he was attempting to defend the indefensible. The motion quite clearly states —

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Look, just settle down. The debate has been conducted in a very civilised manner with members able to put their points of view largely without interruption. Let us keep it that way.

Hon DARREN WEST: Thank you, Mr President. The comments of Hon Jim Chown are recorded in *Hansard*, including the bit where this parliamentary secretary showed his lack of knowledge of his portfolio when talking about which lines are actually in use. I thought that was quite extraordinary. I look forward to reading the *Hansard* that points that out. I might even post that on my Facebook page and quote it to a few people, so that people can see exactly how little knowledge and talent the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport has. I am glad it is on display for all to see.

The motion specifically states —

That the Council —

- (a) condemns the Barnett Government for —
 - (i) closing the Quairading to York and Trayning to Merredin rail lines;

It is quite clear. That is written in point (a)(i). I would have thought that Hon Jim Chown might have read that before getting up to make his rather strange contribution to this debate. The fact is that this government alone, the Grylls-Redman-led National component and the Barnett-Buswell and anybody else who has a say-led Liberal component, has closed these two tier 3 railway lines. That is a fact. They were closed on 31 October 2013 by this government. One reason they were closed was as a result of the debacle caused by the signing of a lease, of which I have a copy, in the dying days of the Court government. Leasing these lines to private operators was a last hurrah attempt by the Court government to cause a bit of carnage for the incoming Labor government to deal with. What has happened since—members do not need me to go into detail—is nothing short of a debacle. Members can ask anyone in the wheatbelt, or anyone in local government, about the implications of this for them.

The other part of this is that, prior to the closure of these rail lines, the government has failed to upgrade the roads that will now carry the grain freight. That is also a fact. As Hon Ken Travers pointed out, he has much photographic evidence of this. We took a lot more photographs than he showed. We could have pulled up every two kilometres and found a fault to photograph! I urge Hon Jim Chown to have a look at those roads, because he clearly has not done that.

Hon Jim Chown: I am out there regularly. As a practising farmer, I have carried thousands and thousands of tonnes on roads in far worse condition than those roads out there.

Hon DARREN WEST: Hon Jim Chown has not been a practising farmer for a long time. When he was a practising farmer, the lines were not under threat of closure.

Hon Jim Chown: Didn't you hear my speech?

The PRESIDENT: Order! We all heard your speech; now we want to hear his!

Hon DARREN WEST: Thank you, Mr President. It is quite clear that these roads have not been brought up to the standard required to carry an extra 85 000 grain trucks per year, alongside school buses and cars carrying mothers and their kids going off to sport, school, boarding school and different places. All that traffic exists on the road today. Often there are slow-moving farm vehicles on the roads, such as tractors moving farming implements. Often there are mobs of sheep or other livestock on the roads. The government is going to add 85 000 trucks a year to these roads. Hon Jim Chown dismissed this. He trivialised it. He called these issues irrelevant.

Hon Jim Chown: I think I called you irrelevant.

Hon DARREN WEST: Hon Jim Chown may think I am irrelevant, but I am speaking now about his inadequacy. He should perhaps listen to me. The earth is not flat. I am wearing on my lapel today something that I was given. This was not arranged; this is how things are. I am wearing a white ribbon for road safety.

A government member: It was arranged.

Hon DARREN WEST: It just turned up; I do not know. The message behind the ribbon is: safe drivers in safe cars on safe roads travelling at safe speeds. Last week we had yet another funeral in Calingiri. It was the funeral of a young man who was taken from us in a road traffic accident. He had a young family. It is a story we are all touched by. In the wheatbelt, 49.5 people in every 100 000 people die on wheatbelt roads, and many, many more than that are traumatised.

Hon Dave Grills: Why?

Hon DARREN WEST: That is a fact. It is not something to be proud of. It is double the figure for the midwest and triple the figure for the Pilbara; 49.5 people per 100 000 die on wheatbelt roads. That is among the highest road fatality rates in the western world. That does not take into account the trauma, injury, hardship to families and grief caused by accidents in which people are not killed. This is a significant issue in my electorate. I do not think trivialising this issue in this house helps anyone. This is something that Hon Jim Chown needs to face up to. The government is putting more trucks on roads that are not prepared for the task now that the rail lines have been closed. Government members need to go and find a mirror so that they can have a good hard look at themselves and why they are doing this. That is the reality. This motion addresses that. It does not talk about Grain Infrastructure Group reports from 2003, or recommendations from reports; this is a very real issue affecting my electorate. I feel very strongly about it. I have been to dozens of funerals of people who have been killed on wheatbelt roads and I want to go to fewer.

As Hon Ken Travers pointed out, there is a solution. At the last election we went to the electorate and said that we had \$30 million to spend on wheatbelt railway lines. Our vote went up in the seat of Central Wheatbelt. There are some people who thought that this was a big enough electorate issue to vote for us. This was clouded by the fact, as Hon Jacqui Boydell pointed out, that the Liberals went with a big blue wraparound in the *Farm Weekly* in the week before the election and announced that it would support viable tier 3 lines. It gave the electorate the impression that it was prepared to support viable tier 3 lines.

Hon Kate Doust interjected.

Hon DARREN WEST: It is one of the 41 broken promises on the website www.brokenpromises.org.au. The Liberal candidate for Central Wheatbelt, Stephen Strange, was a vocal supporter of tier 3 rail. The government gave the impression that it would support viable tier 3 rail. How is this? The most viable tier 3 railway line, according to the Strategic Grain Network Committee report, which was very, very close to being classified as a tier 2 railway line at \$2 per tonne loss compared with road, was the Quairading to York railway line. It was the first line closed by the government! If the government had been sincere with the electorate about supporting viable tier 3 railway lines, and given that CBH invested \$175 million in more efficient lightweight, powerful locomotives, I would be very surprised if, under the same criteria used in the SGNC report, those lines did not come up to a tier 2 standard and were therefore viable. The National Party similarly made a disingenuous promise to the electorate that it would allocate \$300 million for agriculture and that \$75 million of that could go into tier 3. As I have said before, the electors of Central Wheatbelt are conservative in nature. Around 85 per cent of them vote for a conservative party. I would say that it does not really matter which of the conservative parties they vote for, because they will get Premier Barnett and Troy Buswell. That has proved to be the case. This was clearly an issue that concerned the conservative parties enough that they ran around and made these disingenuous and silly promises that they well knew they would not commit to. Hon Jim Chown rightly points out that grain gets to a wheat bin on a truck—that is true. The average distance that trucks travel to a bin, given that most bins are about 25 kilometres apart, is about 12 kilometres.

Hon Jim Chown: That is absolutely incorrect.

Hon DARREN WEST: I will address the member but I only have a minute to go.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I remind members who feel they have been misrepresented that there is an opportunity—if they check their standing orders—to rise at a certain time and request something be done. That has to be the way it is done, not by continuous interjection.

Hon DARREN WEST: I would appreciate a clear run at this in the minute that I have left. The average trip is about 12 kilometres and all the roads share the load. What the government is proposing to do is cart that grain a second time up and down one road. There is a predicted 215 000 tonnes coming out of the Quairading area, along the York–Quairading Road, then through York because the bridge where one turns left to go over to the CBH facility is also not upgraded, just like the rail bridge that the member pointed out. The government has let both of those get to the state of not being up to the job. This tonnage will then travel down to Perth; down the Great Eastern Highway, through the traffic lights in Mundaring, down Greenmount Hill and around to either

Forrestfield or Kwinana. If those opposite think this is just a wheatbelt issue, they need to think again. This is a city issue as well. Because of the government's ineptitude and mismanagement, and the culvert with a six-tonne limit, it will have all these trucks coming through Perth. It is not prepared; it is not ready for the job. It is a bad government trying to defend the indefensible. It has failed the electorate on this issue.

HON COL HOLT (South West — Parliamentary Secretary) [10.51 am]: I follow on from some of the comments made by Hon Darren West. I agree that there is a road safety issue in the wheatbelt region of Western Australia. I will concentrate on this for a while and I will read from a 2013 discussion paper from the RAC called "Where We Stand: We need to talk about the Wheatbelt". I am sure most members will have seen this but I will highlight some of the factors of road safety in the wheatbelt that this very recent RAC report has come up with. There is a section at the front on the report titled "Fact or fiction?" and I will point out some of the things that are highlighted —

Myth: The Wheatbelt's road safety record is no worse than other WA regions. Reality: In 2012 the Wheatbelt fatality rate was almost seven times the State rate, more than double the fatality rate of nearby regions and more than double the fatality rate of the next worst performed region.

It is pretty clear that we have some issues in the wheatbelt. Another myth —

Country roads are particularly dangerous at night. Reality: Almost two in every three fatalities in the Wheatbelt occurred in daylight hours (6am–6pm), well above the metropolitan rate of around one in two.

Myth: Wheatbelt residents are more experienced at driving at high speeds. Reality: Four out of five deaths in the Wheatbelt occurred on roads with a 110km/h speed limit. More than one in every four deaths involved excessive speed as a factor.

Myth: The major problem is city-based drivers who don't know how to drive on country roads. Reality: Two out of three road deaths in the Wheatbelt between 2007–2012 were drivers from the local area.

Myth: Country people are taught when they are growing up about how to handle alcohol. Reality: the percentage of road deaths involving alcohol in the Wheatbelt (2007–2012) was above both the State and near-Wheatbelt result.

Myth: Head on crashes are a major cause of deaths in the Wheatbelt due to overtaking of grain trucks. Reality: More than 70% of fatalities recorded in the Wheatbelt between 2007–2012 involved only one vehicle. Head-on crashes accounted for just 16% of fatalities with just 5% as a result of overtaking.

Myth: It's just the roads are not as good as they should be. Reality: At least 65% of fatal crashes in the Wheatbelt can be attributed to deliberate driver choices, alcohol, speed, drugs, contravene signs and signals, turn in front and careless.

Myth: Most Wheatbelt road deaths happen on busier arterial routes. Reality: Almost two in three road deaths in the Wheatbelt happen on local roads, not the highway network.

I am getting there. It continues —

Myth: Most crashes on country roads happen on dangerous bends. Reality: Three out of every five fatalities in the Wheatbelt from 2007–2012 happened on straight road segments.

Finally —

Myth: Wheatbelt residents know when to use their seatbelts. Reality: Almost one in three deaths of drivers or passengers in the Wheatbelt was someone not wearing a seatbelt.

While we are talking about grain trucks and the non-use of railway lines, I think these excerpts of myths and realities show that it is a much more complex story than that.

Hon Darren West: There are more trucks everywhere.

Hon COL HOLT: I am not denying that; I am saying that there is more to be done than just taking the trucks off the road. I find Hon Ken Travers' photos quite interesting because in talking about single vehicle road accidents, there are some notes in the same RAC report, which state —

Wheatbelt like other non-metropolitan aggregations is characterised by a relative high proportion of single vehicle run-off-road crashes (Hit object, Non collision). Wheatbelt and Near Wheatbelt are notable for their high Hit object rate.

The photograph of the trees encroaching onto the road reserve that Hon Ken Travers showed is totally and absolutely unacceptable and we should be jumping up and down when we see incidents of that kind as well as how it is blatantly reported that that often results in deaths on our country roads. We should be going out there, putting up our own cross and saying, "cut this tree down and clear the road lines." It is just not acceptable and I

totally agree. We have also heard some commentary about dangerous curves. According to this report we also have to worry about the straights, because we are told that “Wheatbelt fatalities (59%) are most likely to occur on straight road segments” as opposed to curves. We should also realise that most of the road deaths, particularly in the wheatbelt, do not happen on the major highways and I have to say that the major highways are where most of the heavy traffic is. Major highways such as Great Northern Highway, Brand Highway and Great Eastern Highway actually carry the greatest volume of heavy traffic movement. But that is not where most of the fatalities in the wheatbelt are occurring; they are occurring on the back roads and streets where there is less heavy vehicle traffic. I am not denying that it might increase, although I do not think there is any evidence of that yet. We have to work out strategies to bring those results down as well as where we broadly target our money—road building, education or wherever it might be.

To back this up I have some more figures from the RAC report. The Great Northern Highway has a greater volume of vehicles of which 33 per cent are heavy vehicles. Brand Highway has 2 500–3 000 vehicle movements every day of which 24 per cent are heavy vehicles. Whereas for some of the smaller arterial roads, for example Goomalling–Merredin Road, there are only 620–700 vehicles a day—fairly low volumes in comparison—with only 13 per cent to 19 per cent being heavy vehicle movements. It is not always the interaction between the number of vehicles and the number of trucks that is causing these accidents. I also quickly highlight that wheatbelt districts statistics show that most people speed over the limit by 10 kilometres an hour or more. We are really talking about driver education as much as improved road safety and if we concentrate more funds that way we may get just as good a result in terms of road safety.

I do not have much time left, so I will flick to the end of the report. In the summary of conclusions in the report, it states —

The key to understanding Wheatbelt’s high fatality rate could be contained within driver attitudes and driver behaviours. At least 65% of fatal crashes in the Wheatbelt can be attributed to deliberate driver choices, alcohol, speed, drugs, contravene signs and signals, ... and careless. A further 15% are attributed to inattention and fatigue.

That is 80 per cent of crashes that were under the control of the driver. I have two 16-year-olds who are learning to drive now and the first thing I teach them when we drive around is to drive to the conditions. Everyone in country Western Australia should know that. If people are driving on a gravel road, they should drive to the conditions that the road presents. It might be the weather, the condition of the road or kangaroos, open fields or forested areas along the side of the road. It is about driving to the conditions that the driver is presented with. Although I agree that country roads can always be improved, and that would help the fatality and accident rates, especially in the wheatbelt given the high collision rate—I have already said that we should concentrate on removing trees from the road reserve—in actual fact there is much more to be done to address the accident and fatality rates in the wheatbelt than just talking about taking grain trucks off the road, which still may not happen, and using rail instead. This is a much broader debate that we in the National Party know very well. We will continue to work on those things that we have control over to address the fatality rate in the wheatbelt region.

HON SAMANTHA ROWE (East Metropolitan) [11.01 am]: I also rise today to support the motion that Hon Ken Travers has put forward this morning. We have heard some really interesting contributions so far, particularly from members on this side of the house. Hon Ken Travers and Hon Darren West put together some well-thought-out and articulate contributions that focused mainly on the first part of the motion. I want to focus on the second part of the motion and give a metropolitan perspective and an east metropolitan perspective. The motion states that the Legislative Council condemns the Barnett government and expresses its grave concerns that these decisions will have significant impacts on road safety across the wheatbelt and increased congestion on metropolitan roads.

We have not yet spoken about traffic congestion. It is a significant issue in the metropolitan area of Perth, particularly in the East Metropolitan Region. Many Perth drivers experience bumper to bumper traffic every day trying to get to work. It is not easy and it is only getting worse. The RAC has put out some interesting material on congestion and the impacts it has on people and businesses. I will read some information on the RAC website from a media release published on 7 March this year. It states —

For anyone lacking firsthand evidence, new research from the WA RAC has found that speeds can be reduced to a crawl of 20 km/h, in 100 kilometre zones.

The Travel Time report looked at 21 key commuter routes—covering more than 500 kilometre of road, including the three freeways, seven highways and several major arterial links.

RAC ... said an extra one million vehicles would be on WA roads in 2020, which meant it was critical to increase investment “in more efficient roads and better public transport”.

“Rapid population growth, major developments around the CBD and our strong economic performance have created the perfect storm in terms of traffic congestion.”

There is no doubt, and I do not think anyone would disagree, that traffic congestion is a real issue in metropolitan Perth. In terms of the impact that traffic congestion can have on WA businesses, the RAC's media release from October this year states —

Perth businesses say traffic congestion is continuing to cut into their bottom line and its impact is now being felt more widely by workers.

The second RAC BusinessWise—Chamber of Commerce and Industry Congestion Survey has confirmed traffic congestion is taking an increasing toll on the productivity and profitability of business and is impacting their ability to recruit, manage and maintain staff.

More than 400 small-to-medium businesses contributed to the 2013 survey, which revealed 83 per cent of respondents believe traffic congestion is having a negative impact on their operations, a result virtually unchanged from the 2012 survey.

External Engagement Manager Liz Carey said over the past 12 months, nearly all respondents (97.3%) reported traffic congestion had increased the time their workers spent on the roads, up from 90 per cent in 2012. Businesses are facing higher fuel costs, lower productivity and the inability to take on more work.

“Of particular concern are the implications for the safety of drivers spending longer hours on the road,”

...

It was not that long ago, during the election campaign in March this year, that each party made massive commitments about ways to ease traffic congestion. The Labor Party had the Metronet plan and the Liberal Party had the Metro Area Express light rail link. It was pretty obvious that each party took this issue seriously. It will not go away in the near future; this is a real issue that both parties worked really hard during the campaign to distinguish themselves on. With that in mind and the fact that there is a traffic congestion issue, it really does not make a hell of a lot of sense to close these rail lines. It will increase traffic, particularly on metropolitan roads and particularly in Forresterfield in my electorate. It does not make sense. I would like a commitment from the government that the closure of these rail lines will not have an impact on roads and that it will not impact on the people of the East Metropolitan Region because of its poor planning, poor implementation and poor governing.

In terms of road safety, the RAC has also put out some media releases that state that it is a reality that an average of around 200 people are lost on WA roads every year. That cannot be ignored. That is a reality and that is a fact. More trucks on our roads will only increase the traffic congestion that drivers are already facing. I am not sure that anyone on the other side of the chamber has thought about that impact on traffic congestion in the Perth metropolitan region. I appreciate that in addition to the member who holds the shadow transport portfolio, a number of the members who spoke today are from regional areas, but it is also a metropolitan issue. It is not constrained to just country members in the chamber. I ask whether the government can make a commitment that the closure of these rail lines will not affect the East Metropolitan Region or other metropolitan areas.

HON BRIAN ELLIS (Agricultural) [11.08 am]: I will keep my comments brief and to the point as I know that other members want to speak on this motion. I am probably on record as saying that I would prefer to see grain on rail, and I stand by that if it is possible. But there is no getting around the fact that a lot of grain is carted on road, even if it is just from the paddock to the bin. Roads get damaged at harvest time. I need to reinforce that: it does not matter where people are; roads get damaged at harvest time. The motion states that the Barnett government has closed the rail lines. It is Brookfield Rail that has mothballed the rail lines mentioned in the motion. I am hopeful that at some stage during the negotiations between the CBH Group and Brookfield, those rail lines will be used again. We did say that we would support commercially viable rail lines. These rail lines have yet to be proven to be commercially viable. Yes, I agree with Hon Ken Travers about the condition of roads and how dangerous they become at harvest time. I could go right around the state and take similar photos of damaged roads and plenty of roads that need to be repaired, not just in that area. I know that Hon Ken Travers is trying to give the impression that no money has been spent on roads in the wheatbelt. I have here some figures and some details that I will use to point out what has been done. These are road upgrades that have been provided for under the state government's \$118 million allocation. To date, over 95 per cent of the identified improvements to state roads and over 74 per cent of local government works have been completed. In addition to the \$118 million program, the state has allocated \$10.5 million from 2012–13 to 2014–15 for upgrade works on the York–Quairading section of the York–Merredin road.

For the Cunderdin–Quairading road, the length of which is 32 kilometres, the budget allocated was \$9.142 million, and \$5.708 million has been spent.

Point of Order

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Could I ask the member to identify the document he is quoting from?

Hon BRIAN ELLIS: They are documents that have been provided to me from the ministry.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I will ask at the end of this speech to have it tabled.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I understand that our standing order that relates to documents being quoted from is when an original document is used specifically to provide a quote. Hon Brian Ellis is not quoting from a document.

Several members interjected.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: He is referring to notes; he is not quoting from a document, as members opposite very well know. So I would urge you, Mr President, not to accept the point of order.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! If members refer to standing order 58, they will see that a member can ask, as Hon Ken Travers did, for identification of a document that a member was quoting from, and that may well be a form of notes or whatever. At the conclusion of the speech, it is within the rights of any member to ask a speaker to table the document. Of course, it is up to that member whether they wish to table that document or not. I hope that clarifies it.

Debate Resumed

Hon BRIAN ELLIS: The honourable member can get these notes quite easily, the same as I did, from the ministry.

Several members interjected.

Hon BRIAN ELLIS: If I can progress, 78 per cent of the length of the Cunderdin–Quairading road is completed. There are some remaining works. Two sections of realignment within the Quairading shire will be completed in 2013–14 and 2014–15. There is an issue, which I think the honourable member mentioned. One large culvert on a section that will be realigned has deteriorated. The shire is monitoring the condition of the culvert and providing regular reports to Main Roads. There are no load restrictions over this culvert at this time. Should the condition of the culvert deteriorate further, propping will be put in place to avoid the requirement for load restrictions. Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd has confirmed that its preference for the out-loading of grain from Quairading is via the Cunderdin–Quairading road, which is in accordance with the agreed grain freight transport strategy.

I have some more figures for the other roads that have been mentioned. On the Kellerberrin–Bencubbin road, the length of the Kellerberrin–Trayning section is 60 kilometres. The budget allocated is \$7.7 million. An amount of \$5.93 million has been spent. Work has been completed on 93 per cent of the length of the road. The remaining works are four kilometres of reconstruction in the Trayning shire. The shire plans to have this work completed in March 2014, before out-loading of the Trayning bin commences. On the Goomalling–Merredin Road, the length of the Nungarin–Merredin section is 37 kilometres. The budget allocated was \$5.218 million and \$3.218 million has been spent. One hundred per cent of the length has been completed. On the York–Merredin road, the length of the York to Quairading section is 65 kilometres. The budget allocated was \$10.5 million. So far, \$650 000 has been spent. Four kilometres have been completed. There are some remaining works. A 10-kilometre section, Quairading westwards, will be completed this financial year. The remaining works will be completed progressively over the following years. The existing budget allocation will enable approximately 40 kilometres of the 65 kilometres to be widened. Additional funds will be sought to complete the full 65 kilometres of widening.

I pointed out those figures to put into perspective the assumption that nothing is being done in the wheatbelt. I also have doubts about the projected figures for trucks coming into the city, as has been mentioned today. Farmers will always cart to the most economical and viable turnaround for them, whether it is in the metropolitan area, Northam or a local siding. I have done it myself. I carted to the metropolitan area and it became uneconomical because the wait was too long. In fact, I have not had time to research what is happening now. How many trucks are coming into the metropolitan area now because the lines are not being used?

Hon Simon O'Brien: No more than normal.

Hon BRIAN ELLIS: No more than normal, Mr President.

Several members interjected.

Hon BRIAN ELLIS: I see that that touches a chord. Farmers have always carted to the metropolitan area and they always will. I suspect that there are no more than normal.

Hon Ken Travers: Until this policy, they never carted to Kwinana. They have actually put the capacity into trucks that unload at Kwinana as a result of your policy.

Hon BRIAN ELLIS: As I have said before, they will go where the most economic return is, and if some have gone to Kwinana, so be it. I do not believe that the numbers have increased, as has been claimed.

I think that everyone in the country is aware that at harvest time they have to take care—this is trucks, cars or whatever on country roads at harvest time, whether they are good or bad roads. Hon Col Holt has pointed out

some of the myths around the bad driving or the accidents that happen when only one truck is on the road. It has been claimed that these particular roads will cause deaths. They may. That can happen on any road in the state. It comes down to driving according to the condition of the road. It is not always the fault of the road; it is the fault of the driver. On my farm, I know that I will be undertaking repairs where the trucks come out of the paddocks and damage the road throughout the farm. The situation is the same with the shires. After harvest, as usual, all the shires will be repairing roads that have been damaged by truck movements.

HON LYNN MacLAREN (South Metropolitan) [11.19 am]: The Greens heartily support this motion. It is very rare that we support motions couched in terms that condemn the government. I have spoken before on several occasions when I have thought condemning the government was too heavy a hammer to use, but in this case I commend the member for the way he has worded the motion.

Hon Ken Travers: That's because you're the soft, cuddly Greens!

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: I believe it is something we need to speak very strongly about to express our grave concerns about the significant impacts on road safety that closing the Quairading–York and Trayning–Merredin rail lines will have. Several members have mentioned—I very much appreciate the contributions from both Hon Colin Holt and Hon Brian Ellis—the role of driver behaviour in road safety. In fact Hon Col Holt quoted from an RAC report, which was very enlightening and we should all be aware that driver behaviour causes problems. That can happen anywhere, on any road. However, both honourable members were with me on the committee that looked into the petition about the closure of the tier 3 lines.

Hon Kate Doust: A unanimous report.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: The result could be no clearer because the committee recommended that we allow those tier 3 lines to remain open until the end of 2014 to enable time for a business case to be done. This is why I am very concerned about this. The careful work we did and, as Hon Kate Doust, who was also on that committee, has rightly said, it was a unanimous decision to allow time to investigate whether the tier 3 lines were viable. I was shocked to hear the announcement that the Trayning–Merredin rail lines and Quairading–York rail lines would be closed well before the period in which we hoped to do the business case. As a city member and someone who includes the areas of Kwinana and Fremantle in my region, I am well aware of the sensitivity to any increase in trucking. Since the World Health Organization report that identified that diesel particulates are a particularly dangerous carcinogenic, my electorate is increasingly concerned about any increase in trucking. I take the point that additional trucks are not going to Kwinana right now, but I can tell members that they are very concerned in that area —

Hon Simon O'Brien: I know you've been to Fremantle and Kwinana, but have you ever been to Quairading?

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: Yes, sir; I have.

Hon Simon O'Brien: Good.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: I thank Hon Simon O'Brien for allowing me to express my knowledge of the wheatbelt region; yes, I am aware of it. I want to raise a point—Hon Samantha Rowe made this point clearly, so I do not want to labour the point—that these are health matters. Until our trucks have better filters for diesel emissions, any amount of increased trucking will increase air pollution to an extent that it creates a health impact.

Several members interjected.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: The Hansard reporter is probably finding it difficult to record what she is meant to; which is my speech, not members' interjections.

Several members interjected.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: However, I will try to speak to Hansard to assist her in that.

Hon Brian Ellis mentioned the expenditure on these roads and I say that money should be spent. I think the roads need some upgrading. Once those roads are carrying grain-laden trucks, the roads will require increased maintenance. It will increase the financial liability required to maintain those many kilometres of roads, when it would be better to focus the revenue on getting the rail line up and going because I, for one, and many people in Western Australia agree that state infrastructure is not just for the mining resources industry but also for the agricultural industry. This is essential infrastructure to get grain to port and therefore we condemn the Barnett government for closing those lines.

HON PAUL BROWN (Agricultural) [11.23 am]: There has been a lot of debate today. I thank Hon Jim Chown and Hon Brian Ellis for highlighting the spending that has been done on country roads. I will spend the remaining time on the fact that CBH Group and Brookfield Rail, the users and operators of the country rail lines, are in negotiation with each other. That is where the commercial priorities lie. They are the users and the operators of the rail system at the moment, and they are in negotiations.

Hon Darren West: Who's the owner?

Hon PAUL BROWN: Hon Lynn MacLaren made some errors in her statement just then. The two lines, the York–Quairading line and the Training–Merredin line, have not closed. They are open; they are non-operational for safety reasons, and it is quite within Brookfield's right to do that. The other four lines are still open and negotiations have been undertaken recently for them to remain open and in use until the end of June 2014. I am sure that within that time frame, CBH and Brookfield will come together to negotiate a suitable access agreement that they will collectively bring to government and we will peruse their business case, so they can tell us which lines are viable that they will use and which lines are not viable that they will not use. That is the right and proper thing to occur in a commercial sense.

Point of Order

Hon KEN TRAVERS: During the debate I asked Hon Brian Ellis to identify a document and I would appreciate it being tabled at the end of his speech. I am not sure whether he is prepared to table it.

The PRESIDENT: You can request.

Hon BRIAN ELLIS: I do not have the notes now; I have given them to Hansard.

The PRESIDENT: Can you answer the question: are you prepared to table the document?

Hon BRIAN ELLIS: I don't think there is any need, Mr President.

The PRESIDENT: I will take that as a no.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The only reason he can deny to table it is if he claims it is confidential. Earlier in the conversation he said it should be available publicly, so it cannot be confidential. I thought the member would indicate that he would therefore table it.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: If I may, it might clarify some understanding or, if to the contrary, clarify a misunderstanding on my part. My understanding of this particular standing order is that when a member relies upon an original document to establish a point by quoting from a document, which he must identify, the purpose of identifying the document is to establish that what he is quoting is in fact real; that it is backed up by the genuine document. The purpose of tabling it is to prove the existence of that document. When a member reads from a document, that does not of itself mean he is quoting from it; he reads from a document for the purpose of an aide-mémoire.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich interjected.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: It struck me that Hon Brian Ellis was reading from a document and that is quite distinct from quoting from a document.

Hon Sue Ellery: He denied that when I said that.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Mr President —

The PRESIDENT: That is fine, but I will not open up a debate on a point of order.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: There is precedent on the matter that Hon Simon O'Brien has raised. Hon Sue Ellery will know this better than most. The member did not indicate that he was only using notes; he indicated he was quoting from them. He did not claim that he was not quoting. It goes back to the same circumstances when Hon Sue Ellery was required to table documents in this place.

Hon Simon O'Brien: Did he say he was quoting? He did not.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The matter is quite simple. The member was asked to identify the document he was making some statements from. He did that. The member has been requested to table that document. Standing order 58(2) merely states —

At the conclusion of a speech in which a Member has quoted from a document, the document shall be tabled upon the request of any other Member, unless the Member states the document is a confidential document.

That is the end of the matter.

Hon BRIAN ELLIS: I was interested in the toing and froing. I have no real problem with tabling the document except that I have given it to Hansard. It is not confidential.

The PRESIDENT: You are prepared to table the document. The document is tabled.

Hon BRIAN ELLIS: Yes.

Hon Ken Travers: Thank you.

[See paper 1032.]

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.

The PRESIDENT: That debate lapses, according to standard practice. I congratulate members on a quality debate with thoughtful contributions from all speakers about different aspects of the issue.

PATIENT ASSISTED TRAVEL SCHEME

Motion

HON MARTIN ALDRIDGE (Agricultural) [11.30 am] — without notice: I move —

That this Council —

- (a) recognises the importance of the patient assisted travel scheme in assisting regional people in accessing specialist medical care;
- (b) acknowledges the scheme requires review to ensure that it remains effective and responsive to the health care needs of regional people; and
- (c) calls for a parliamentary committee inquiry with a view to making recommendations to government on its improvements.

I start by talking about this important issue and making some comments in relation to part (c) of my motion. Obviously, this motion is part of private members' business and, as is consistent with standing orders, will not come to a vote today and so will not formally be referred to one of the parliamentary committees to which this house is entitled to refer a matter. However, I hope I have couched the motion in terms that will receive support from across the spectrum of the house. I think this is an important issue and it is important enough that the relevant parliamentary committee could conduct an appropriate inquiry into how we can improve access to health care, in particular specialist health care, in regional Western Australia. The patient assisted travel scheme, commonly referred to as PATS, makes a significant contribution to people living in regional WA who, from time to time, are required to access specialist medical care not found locally. Preparing for today's debate I found it interesting, and it was something I did not know, that some 30 years ago this scheme was a national scheme administered and funded by the commonwealth government. It was then called the isolated patients travel and accommodation assistance scheme, or IPTAAS, and it was provided to people required to travel in excess of 200 kilometres for specialist medical treatment and oral surgery. In 1987 the responsibility for IPTAAS transferred to the states and territories and direct funding was provided by the commonwealth to the states and territories through a special revenue assistance grant. In 1999 that direct funding assistance was abolished in favour of the states and territories agreeing to a revenue flow from the goods and services tax. Although funds are no longer earmarked for PATS from the commonwealth, this matter is addressed in the National Healthcare Agreement 2012 and subsequent agreements. I will quote from the Council of Australian Governments National Healthcare Agreement 2012. There is a section headed "Better Health Services". I will quote clause 20 under the heading "Roles and Responsibilities", which states —

States and Territories will provide health and emergency services through the public hospital system, based on the following Medicare principles:

Subclause (c) states —

arrangements are to be in place to ensure equitable access to such services for all eligible persons, regardless of their geographic location.

I think equity and access to specialist medical care across a state is really important to consider in the debate today. It is important to note that since the state has been administering PATS, since 1999, there have been some significant changes and improvements to this scheme, including in 2008 a boost to PATS of \$30.8 million directly from royalties for regions committed to over the last term of the Parliament. This has directly resulted in a 43 per cent increase in the number of patient trips supported by PATS, a 78 per cent increase in the overall cost of PATS that has been met by government and a 57 per cent increase in the number of subsidised vehicle trips, with the greatest number of increases coming from the midwest, goldfields and wheatbelt regions of our state. In 2012 the WA Country Health Service embarked on a fairly comprehensive community consultation program as part of the Southern Inland Health Initiative. I was fortunate enough to attend some of those sessions—I think I attended three. It was interesting to note from those forums that commonly two major issues raised by the community and stakeholders from the medical fraternity were PATS and, second to that, volunteer transport. WA country health service staff at these forums said that those two issues were common amongst all the other forums they held across the southern inland health area. It is widely acknowledged amongst the community and within the WA Country Health Service that PATS is a system designed for a different era in medical service delivery.

Three specific areas should be the focus of an inquiry into this matter. They are the level of funding applied to the transport and accommodation subsidies provided; the inflexibility of eligibility measures in applying for PATS funding, including the application process; and the need to consider exceptional circumstances. In relation

to the funding through the patient assisted travel scheme, an applicant travelling by motor vehicle can claim a fuel subsidy of 16c a kilometre and a commercial accommodation allowance of \$60 a night, or \$75 a night if travelling with an approved escort. It is interesting to note that each year the Australian Taxation Office hands down a determination in relation to reasonable running costs of motor vehicles by which a person can ordinarily claim deduction if it is used for work. I note from the determination on the ATO's website that those reasonable rates of deduction range from 63c a kilometre for the smallest motor vehicle through to 75c a kilometre for the largest motor vehicle. I think that is an important point to make in relation to the imbalance occurring between what is reasonable in terms of recompensing someone for that motor vehicle subsidy in particular. Something similar could be said about commercial accommodation costs and the allowance of \$60 a night. Members in this place all know the cost of commercial accommodation in Perth, and I would suggest that even with the cheapest of accommodation, we would be lucky to reach 50 per cent of the cost outlay. Another issue that has come to my attention is the awareness by both medical practitioners and patients in their ability and eligibility to claim PATS assistance. Over the years as we have tried to improve PATS, we have probably inherently added to the complexity associated with claiming assistance, as we now have different rules from location to location and from illness to illness. We are even now finding that medical practitioners are charging a higher consultation fee so that they are able to process the PATS paperwork. In some cases the return from PATS is not that much more significant than the fees the medical practitioner charges to complete the paperwork. They are all areas we probably need to look at.

Earlier I talked a bit about exceptional circumstances, and I think primary eligibility criteria at the moment of the 100-kilometre minimum distance to specialist medical care needs to be reassessed. I will talk specifically about the case in my electorate of Clare and Terry Priddle who reside in Bindoon, just north of Perth. Clare and Terry are the primary carers of three children, all of whom have autism, and two of whom have the neurodegenerative disorder leukodystrophy. Managing the health needs of their three children is a full-time commitment for both of them. Accessing specialist medical care in Perth, often at Princess Margaret Hospital for Children as well as through other specialist medical providers, is usually a weekly affair, if not more frequent. The official Main Roads distance between Bindoon and Perth is 84 kilometres, some 16 kilometres short of meeting the eligibility criteria for PATS. On the surface of this, most people suffering from a minor ailment, such as a broken limb or something not ongoing, and requiring a single or perhaps a couple of trips to Perth to see a specialist would be able to absorb the financial challenge to do that. However, there are exceptional cases, such as Clare and Terry Priddle. I do not think anybody could argue that the medical needs of their family are not placing a financial burden on them, because the medical services they require are not available locally and they have to travel to access them.

Some might ask why the Priddle family does not move closer to where they can access the specialist medical care they need. Quite often families make decisions around where they live based on the services provided; however, the Priddle family has some very good reasons for not doing that. The Priddles have enormous local family support in the greater Chittering area, and given the circumstances of raising three children with different medical requirements, they heavily rely upon that. Another thing available to the family in that area is community housing. A partnership between the Shire of Chittering and the Department of Housing will provide appropriate housing for the family. I understand that within 12 months they will have a specially built house for the disabled available to them because as the condition of their two daughters further degenerates, it is likely that both of them will be wheelchair-bound in the near future. The other thing they have locally is fantastic school support. The family is supported by the Disability Services Commission and the local area coordinator, and their advice to the family is that given the level of support and understanding provided to them from their local school, there would be a real risk in relocating the family to another town or location where they might not be provided with that same level of support. This is a good example of PATS perhaps not providing that equity of access to specialist medical care, and of exceptional circumstances like this that need to be considered when administering the patient assisted travel scheme.

Another example of this is from a constituent of mine who travelled from Narrogin to Perth to seek specialist medical treatment. He put in his claim and it was rejected on the grounds that the specialist service he sought was available in Bunbury, some eight kilometres closer than Perth. In the context of a travelling distance of some 190 kilometres, that begs the question whether the system needs to be more flexible. The system failed to recognise that perhaps this patient would have been better supported in Perth, where he could have had a greater choice of medical specialists, and perhaps family or friends to support him in terms of overnight accommodation. Perhaps he could have linked other business and activities with his visit to Perth. Perhaps in that case he may have been remunerated to the extent that he would have been able to access the service that was eight kilometres closer. I would not be surprised if some of the criteria around PATS is aimed at reducing the number of applications because, obviously, if we increase or broaden the PATS criteria, there must be funding attached to it. There is probably some reluctance to bring the system in line with the National Healthcare Agreement, which provides equitable access to medical care across our state, because that will come at a significant cost.

There are a few other areas I would like to look at in my concluding remarks, one of which is the list of specialist medical services that are not available for funding through PATS, including speech pathologists, physiotherapists, podiatrists, clinical psychologists, occupational therapists, audiologists, pathologists, dentists and nursing professionals. In the context of a broad look at PATS, perhaps these services should be considered as areas of need, particularly those provided in the mental health area. This issue featured in my inaugural speech earlier this year and is one of the challenges that I hope to make some progress on during my time in this place. I am sure regional members would agree with me that PATS requires a review—just looking at the number of contacts made to our electorate offices on this matter demonstrates the need to have a better look at this system. The work done by the staff of the Western Australia Country Health Service is good, but they are constrained by their ability to deliver services within the eligibility criteria of the system and the funding provided. Obviously, there are other areas in which we can bring medical care to people, rather than bringing people to the service. I am sure that in responding the parliamentary secretary will talk about telehealth as well as visiting specialists and a few other areas in which we can perhaps try to prevent some of these long journeys to Perth.

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition) [11.45 am]: I rise on behalf of the opposition to indicate that we are happy to support the motion moved by the honourable member. Nobody in the chamber would disagree that the patient assisted travel scheme is an important and vital scheme to provide health care to patients living in regional Western Australia, and we should make some steps towards at least making it more equitable than it might otherwise be. There are a number of issues within the existing PATS that a range of people have identified. PATS does not cover dental treatment, which can sometimes be very costly, and there are far fewer dental practitioners in regional Western Australia than there are general medicine practitioners. Under PATS, the commercial rate for accommodation in Perth is set at \$60 a night, and I challenge anyone to find a place in Perth that is close to one of the major tertiary hospitals for \$60 a night. Renal dialysis is unfortunately a chronic need in many areas of regional Western Australia. It is one of the top reasons for patients using PATS. If that is the case, why are we not investing more in services that allow people to receive dialysis closer to where they live? That is a major investment we must make. There are a range of other matters, not the least of which was raised by the Newman Health Advisory Group. In 2011 it worked on the issues confronting patients transferring from remote communities and not being eligible for accommodation costs while in transit. It is not just a case of getting on a plane and ending up in Perth, but also travelling to Newman to get a flight. There were also delays in reimbursement, particularly when patients were being told they needed urgent treatment in Perth, classification inflexibility—so no capacity to apply a bit of heart when sometimes things get a bit complicated—problems accessing appropriate accommodation, and no taxi voucher system, which is a problem if someone cannot get from the airport to their accommodation. If a person is unwell, hopping onto one of those buses is not the best option.

The Auditor General released a report in June this year in which his office identified a range of issues, some of which were created by the introduction of the new database system that was announced amidst great fanfare in 2009 and that came into operation properly in 2012. In particular, he said that the decisions were not always adequately authorised or recorded. Generally, he found that the department was managing some aspects of the scheme well, but others certainly could have been improved. He made the point that some control weaknesses had either arisen or had been exacerbated by the introduction of the PATS database. The department did not address the risk of reduced administrative control resulting from the more streamlined processes that it introduced.

My colleague the shadow Minister for Health, Roger Cook, drew to my attention a matter that had been brought to his attention by somebody who used the patient assisted travel scheme recently. He spoke to her this morning and she is happy to be described as Sandy from Broome. Sandy recently had to travel to Perth for an operation on her shoulder to have a plate inserted to assist a healing fractured humerus. She was entitled to flights and the \$60 for accommodation. Two weeks later, she received a letter from PATS with details of another appointment in Perth for a follow-up consultation. She did not think she needed it because she had access to the treating GP in Broome and, if necessary, Broome Hospital. Her doctor agreed with her, so she cancelled the appointment and the travel. A fortnight later, Sandy received another letter with details of a further appointment for the pain management clinic and more booked flights. She was not in any pain, and after again consulting with her GP she cancelled the appointment and her flights herself. Had she not been an honest and vigilant person and quite proactive, she would have followed PATS' instructions, got on the flights and attended the appointments. If in fact she had been out for a free trip to Perth, she could have used those flights that PATS had booked for her, gone to the appointment that she did not really need—a pain management appointment was not going to be any inconvenience—and had a visit to Perth. Basically, two appointments were made and two sets of flights were booked for her that she did not need.

The honourable member indicated that he would like a parliamentary committee inquiry into three essential matters: funding, eligibility measures and the need to consider exceptional circumstances. There was also perhaps an additional matter of looking at what other specialist allied health services might be added to the system. If Hon Martin Aldridge gets the opportunity to reply to this debate, I would welcome knowing whether

he, as a government member, actually asked the Minister for Health whether he was prepared to fix or change those things or whether the minister was prepared to set up a review himself and to appoint someone independent to chair it and just get it done. If he asked and was knocked back, that would be interesting information for the house to have. I am not opposed to a parliamentary inquiry, but if the mover of this motion has not asked the minister, I wonder why, as a member of the government, he has not asked the government to do it directly and just get it done. It seems to me that this is about political will. There is a serious question around financial resources obviously arising from some of the things the member might want to change. Again, that is a question of political will and political priorities. I would welcome some advice from the member as to whether he has directly asked the Minister for Health or, indeed, the Minister for Regional Development whether they are prepared to make that money available. The issues he raised are policy issues that are well within the purview of the department. The department already knows about these issues, because people complain to it all the time. It is well within the realms of the government of which Hon Martin Aldridge is a member to actually commission a review itself—to appoint somebody independent to do the appropriate consultation and make recommendations back to government. I am not sure why Parliament is the only place in which to do it and I am not sure why a government member cannot ask the government to do that itself.

Hon Col Holt: It is a bipartisan approach, though.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am happy for him to go to the minister and ask him to commission a review.

Hon Col Holt: I am saying that a committee brings a bipartisan approach to it.

Hon SUE ELLERY: That can be achieved without doing this. Ministers commission reviews into all sorts of things all the time. Maybe he has asked and the minister has said no. Maybe he does not want to do it that way and wants to do it this way for a particular reason. I am inviting the mover of the motion to tell me that. That is all I am doing. With those comments, we are happy to support the motion.

HON ALYSSA HAYDEN (East Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary) [11.53 am]: I would first like to thank Hon Martin Aldridge for bringing such a fantastic motion to this house on such an important and worthy scheme. The patient assisted travel scheme has been strongly supported by both federal and state members of the Liberal Party over many years. That leads me to speak briefly about the late Senator Judith Adams, who was from Kojonup. She strongly advocated the benefits of the patient assisted travel scheme from her first day of entering the Senate, if not prior. Her support for PATS came from her experience as a rural nurse working with the Royal Flying Doctor Service and as a former member of the council of the National Rural Health Alliance, but also from her own personal, heartfelt experience as a cancer patient living in rural WA. Senator Judith Adams would drive three-odd hours from Kojonup to Royal Perth Hospital to undergo her treatment. If being a cancer patient going through debilitating chemotherapy treatment was not bad enough, she would then have to drive herself back home again alone. Unfortunately, this experience was not hers alone; most people in regional WA who need specialised medical services have the same experience. I do not want to harp on the sad side of this. Instead, I would like to put a silver lining around this cloud. Friday, 22 June 2007 was a very special day for Senator Judith Adams, as it was when her hard work and dedication in raising awareness of PATS came to fruition with the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs holding an inquiry into the operation and effectiveness of PATS. She was, of course, a member of that committee. I know she would be extremely happy that we are standing in this place to again talk about the importance of PATS and to ensure its relevance and effectiveness.

Back in June 2008 the Liberal Party went to the state election with a promise to spend \$30 million in four years to strengthen PATS by giving it a 50 per cent boost. I am pleased to say that the additional funding and attention to this program has seen a massive increase in the take-up of this scheme by our country community. I want to give a couple of figures and facts to support that statement. PATS supported over 77 000 individual patient trips at a cost of \$34.2 million during the 2012–13 financial year. It is worth noting that we went from 53 215 trips in 2008–09 to 77 894 trips in 2012–13—an increase of 24 679 trips. Hon Martin Aldridge also alluded to the regions that benefit from this scheme. When I went through the table I was interested to see which region was accessing PATS the most, which is the wheatbelt region. Obviously PATS has been promoted quite strongly out there and people understand how to access and use the system. Use of PATS in that region has gone from 11 132 trips in 2008–09 to 16 408 trips—an increase of 5 276 trips over the past five years. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the WA Country Health Service for increasing awareness of the scheme and simplifying the system. I went online yesterday and looked at the way that people can apply for PATS. A page on the website outlines six easy steps, which help people to understand what they need to do to apply for the scheme. As we all understand and appreciate, when people are ill, the last thing they want to be stuck with is paperwork and trying to understand a government system, as we always seem to make them a little harder than they need to be. Obviously, this increased awareness and simplification of the system has assisted, and we can see that by the increase in the number of trips over the past five years.

The WA Country Health Service has looked at future projections on how the patient assisted travel scheme will be taken up. Currently, 77 894 trips are accessed through PATS, and by 2016–17, it is projected that 97 945 trips

could be accessed through PATS. This is a fantastic way to support people in remote and regional communities in WA.

Hon Sue Ellery touched on the Auditor General's 2013 review. I want to make sure Hon Martin Aldridge is aware that after that review, WACHS took immediate action to improve the governance of the administration of this policy and initiated a review of the administration model for PATS, which will be undertaken in 2014. I encourage members to take part in that process, and I will keep the house up to date. It is great to see that the WA Country Health Service understands and appreciates how important this service is and will ensure that the service remains relevant and effective.

The government has achieved the target of \$30 million in four years. Government broken promises have been alluded to a number of times. I want to say that we have exceeded on some promises, and this is one of them. This is a fantastic, worthy cause that we have injected increased money, time and resources into. We need to ensure that the PAT scheme remains effective and relevant. I think the issues raised by Hon Martin Aldridge and Hon Sue Ellery are important to consider and take on board when WACHS is doing its review. Changes to PATS made by the Liberal-National government through the Minister for Health, Hon Dr Kim Hames, include allowing patients from Northam and York to access the scheme; allowing eligible carers and escorts to travel with aged, disabled and cancer patients; allowing cancer patients who need to travel more than 350 kilometres by road to get fully funded commercial air travel to Perth; and allowing cancer patients to claim subsidies for a recovery night following treatment. I spoke about Senator Judith Adams having to drive home after her treatment, but people can now stay overnight after treatment, which is obviously a lot safer for patients and others on the roads; it is also very humane. Carers and escorts also have an accommodation allowance available when a cancer patient is hospitalised. As we all know, when a person is ill, having someone that you love close by is extremely important. The government's changes have already hugely improved the PAT scheme.

I quickly touch on the telehealth service. Although PATS is vital and important to people in regional WA, it is just as important to make sure that other services go to the regions. The telehealth service is a fantastic way to bring experts to people in their home towns.

As I am running out of time, I quickly mention the third part of the motion that asks for a committee inquiry. Dr Kim Hames is more than happy to look into ways we can have an inquiry into the PAT scheme, and I am more than happy to talk to the member behind the Chair to work out how we can do that. As I said, this government strongly supports PATS and wants to make sure that the scheme continues to be relevant and efficient so it can deliver the best possible services to remote WA.

HON LYNN MacLAREN (South Metropolitan) [12.03 pm]: I would like to add my voice in support of the motion. It is a very well thought out and welcome motion. This is an issue that comes up from time to time in this chamber, and I appreciate the thoughtful approach the member has taken to crafting the motion and putting it before us. As the Greens' spokesperson for health, I think a review and improvement of the PAT scheme could potentially be a very important contribution to health services in Western Australia. I personally know people who live in remote areas who have had issues with PATS. Someone I know with a heart issue lives in Hopetoun. I do not want to focus on individuals because this is a systemic issue in Western Australia. As we have a population spread out over vast distances, there is pressure on our services to deliver appropriate and quality health care in the regions. One of the reasons behind the logic of the royalties for regions scheme is to ensure that people in the regions have appropriate services. The provision of appropriate health services is a vital part of what the state government of Western Australia should do. I think we should consider whether royalties for regions funding is being spent appropriately on essential services, because health is an expensive part of our budget. With those words, the Greens recognise the importance of the patient assisted travel scheme and acknowledge that it needs a review. We would like to join the voices calling for some kind of inquiry. As the government has indicated, this may not be a parliamentary inquiry, but may be an independent inquiry; in any case, we should move forward quickly and in this term to achieve something for those patients who desperately need this scheme.

HON JACQUI BOYDELL (Mining and Pastoral) [12.06 pm]: I will give a couple of practical examples of the administration processes of the patient assisted travel scheme and a bit about the archaic way in which it is administered on the ground and how that affects people trying to access the scheme. As Hon Alyssa Hayden rightly said, the WA Country Health Service webpage has a seemingly easy six-step process for application—it is good that it is very easy to follow. I will talk about the ramifications of the administration process for applicants, and on the record I will give some examples of the impact that it has had on people at a time when they are unwell and emotionally not at their best. I would like to highlight that PATS does not allow for the emotional wellbeing and mental health of patients and their families trying to access the service. The cold hard nature of the delivery of PATS is the reason why we get complaints from constituents. We all recognise that PATS is extremely vital to regional people and support it, but it could be improved in areas, given advances in technology and the introduction of telehealth, which has been introduced more widely for delivery of specialist

services in regional WA. I thank Hon Martin Aldridge for bringing this motion into the house today and for giving the reasons that a government member may ask to discuss the establishment of a parliamentary committee inquiry. Hon Alyssa Hayden delivered a commitment to the house that this government and the Minister for Health are willing to undertake a review, and we look forward to being a part of that process.

I do not know whether any members have tried to access PATS, but I certainly have and I will talk about my experience with the six-step process down that track. The administrative process requires the patient to get a form from the doctor. They then have to take that form to the patient assisted travel scheme clerk at the hospital at a time that could be very stressful for them. If a child is not well, their parents may have to try to organise child care for other children, while also trying to remain calm and have at the forefront of their mind the quickest and best way to get health treatment. It is a manual step for people to go to the PATS clerk, who does not understand their medical condition. The PATS clerk then decides whether to approve the claim, which could take a couple of days. People want answers; they want to know when they will be treated. They also have to make travel and accommodation plans et cetera. They might need to contact family or friends to look after their children, and they might have to reorganise their work schedule or their children's school schedule. These are the very practical impacts that rebound on people on a daily basis as they try to work through this seemingly easy process. The onus is on the patient, but it is the patient who is suffering. The onus needs to be on the system to support the patient and their family. It needs to be a caring, well-rounded system that provides them with the quickest access to a specialist.

Once the claim is approved, which might take a couple of days, the person is booked on a plane or a bus—whichever mode of travel is approved—and accommodation is organised. The person has to take the blue form to the specialist and get the specialist to sign it. The last thing the person would be thinking about when receiving specialist care, and they are trying to take in what the specialist is telling them about their treatment, or the treatment for a child or an elderly relative, is that they have to get this blue form signed. It is an onerous manual task when people are trying to deal with very stressful circumstances. When people have described it to me, I have found it gut wrenching. I want to be involved in a government and a system that supports regional people, not just in their medical treatment, but also from a mental health and emotional wellbeing perspective. That is as much our responsibility as is treating the ailment. Once the person gets the blue form signed and they return home, they have to go back to the PATS clerk. Although they might be recovering from surgery or might be unwell after receiving chemotherapy treatment, they need the final sign-off on whether the claim has been accepted.

These areas do not necessarily have to be changed in a budgetary sense. Although it is easy to argue for an increase in the rate that people are paid for the cost of travel and accommodation each night, other areas of the system could be changed that may not have such an onerous budgetary impact on the state government's finances, given that that is always an important factor.

Given the advancements in technology, I do not understand why the dedicated PATS clerks on wards cannot speak to the specialist's office and verify that the person did attend, rather than making the person do all this paperwork and then bring it back. I am sure that in 2013, there is a software package that would allow that process to occur and would require much less manual work by the person, the PATS clerk and the people at the Department of Health who manage the hard-copy paperwork. That is one area that could be looked at.

There have been advancements in telehealth. Hon Sue Ellery pointed out a case in Broome of the overuse of the system. Telehealth may be able to provide a much more stringent and structured process in the initial circumstances or the follow-up circumstances. In my case, another part of the archaic nature of PATS was highlighted. When I was living in Carnarvon, I had an emergency on a weekend; it happened outside the administrative hours of operation of the PATS clerk. I flew to Perth for treatment. When I returned home some two weeks later, the PATS clerk would not accept my claim because I had not lodged it prior to going to Perth. However, it was an emergency on a Saturday. My point was: how could I have done that when it was a Saturday and the PATS office did not open until nine o'clock on Monday morning? It was the last thing on my mind, and rightly so. Even the doctor in the case said that it was an emergency on a weekend. There must be a way to support the patient and their family if they happen to have an accident on a Saturday or Sunday, or even on a weekday after 5.00 pm.

These are the issues that the review could consider without any necessary infringement on the state budget. Those processes could be more flexible and the range of services could be widened to include allied health, which other members have touched on today. I think we all recognise that mental health and emotional wellbeing are as important as physiological health.

Again, I thank all members for their contributions today and Hon Martin Aldridge for bringing this motion to the house for a really good discussion. Hopefully, under the review process committed to by Hon Alyssa Hayden, we can make some structural changes in the first instance.

HON ADELE FARINA (South West) [12.16 pm]: I know that a number of people want to speak, so I will keep my contribution very brief. I congratulate Hon Martin Aldridge for bringing this issue before Parliament. It is an important issue. The patient assisted travel scheme is a significant issue for people living in regional Western Australia. All members who have spoken before me have very clearly and articulately outlined the issues. Hon Jacqui Boyde is correct. It is not just a matter of additional funding being made available so that people are adequately compensated for the cost of travelling to Perth to get medical treatment; it is also about making the process simpler. It is crazy that elderly sick people are being asked to undertake a very complex administrative process; if they do not get their form in before they head off on that journey, they lose the opportunity to claim. It is ridiculous and it needs to be fixed. I welcome the comments by Hon Alyssa Hayden that Hon Dr Kim Hames, the Minister for Health, will look at undertaking a review. I hope that that review will be a full and public review so that members of the community can participate in that process and make contributions about their own personal experiences, because everyone's experiences are different.

I also ask that in that review, we do not just review PATS itself; PATS needs to be reviewed in the context of the provision of health services to people in regional WA. I would like to bring a particular issue to point. A general surgeon who lives in Busselton provides a general surgery practice to the people of Busselton and Dunsborough. He has been doing that for the past 38 years. Over 38 years, he has built a very good and growing practice. He has now reached the age at which he needs to retire. He has indicated that he will retire in 2014, which leaves the problem of who will continue the work of the general surgeon in Busselton. He has had conversations with Perth-based surgeons and has identified a Perth-based surgeon who is interested in relocating to Busselton and taking over his theatre list so that we can continue to have a locally based surgeon in Busselton. But the government, through the Department of Health, has made a decision to transfer his theatre list to doctors in Bunbury and visiting Perth-based surgeons. I do not understand why a government would make a decision to place a burden on people who are ill and in need of health services by requiring them to travel to Bunbury for consultations for surgery if it is a general surgery and it can be conducted locally. In fact, it was a Liberal Party promise at the last state election that it would improve and deliver a world-class healthcare service that provided a prompt service of the highest standard. I would have thought that having a surgeon based locally in Busselton would provide the best health outcome for the people living in Busselton and Dunsborough. There is enough pressure on the doctors in Bunbury as it is, servicing a much larger area. It makes no sense at all that we are now going to require those people living in Busselton, Dunsborough, Yallingup and the surrounding area to either travel to Bunbury for that treatment or wait for a visiting surgeon to come to Bunbury to have that surgery, when that service could be provided by a locally based surgeon. When we review the patient assisted travel scheme, it is really important that we also remember that, wherever possible, the best model is to provide the health service locally. When that is possible, that should be the option that is preferred, and I am sure it would be a far more cost-effective option for government.

We need to also remember that people who live in Busselton and travel to Bunbury to access healthcare services cannot get PATS. There are a lot of other issues that go along with that. PATS is really important. Making sure that administratively we make it simpler and that it does compensate the true cost of accessing those healthcare services is very important. Hon Martin Aldridge is absolutely correct; people cannot get accommodation in Perth for \$60 a night, so there is a huge out-of-pocket expense, as well as all the emotional and physical trauma for a person having to make the journey and to go through that administrative hassle at a time when they are not well. That is an issue and we need to look at it. Needing to access PATS should be the last option. We should be looking at providing medical services locally. The situation that has arisen in Busselton in relation to the surgeon who is retiring and the fact that the government, through the Department of Health, has opted to go for visiting surgeons, rather than supporting the relocation of a Perth-based surgeon to Busselton, makes no sense at all to me. I call on Hon Alyssa Hayden to take that back to the Minister for Health and to ask the Minister for Health to look at it and take some action to stop that from happening, because it makes no sense. If a Perth-based surgeon is willing to relocate to Busselton and continue to provide a service that has been provided there for the last 38 years, that is the best option. I commend all members who have made a contribution on this important issue.

HON MARTIN ALDRIDGE (Agricultural) [12.22 pm] — in reply: I will wrap up the debate today in the time that remains. I ran out of time to address a few of the comments that were made. I think they were captured in some of the points that were raised by other members, and I thank them all for their contributions. One of those obviously relates to telehealth. Telehealth creates an opportunity for the provision of specialist medical care in regional towns, particularly when we think about patients in a post-surgery setting who require a post-surgery consultation with their specialist. That can be done close to where they live, rather than having to take on the onerous task of travelling to Perth to have that post-surgery consultation. There are many other reasons why telehealth will help in trying to close the distance barrier between regional people and accessing the specialist services they need.

I completely agree with some of the comments made by Hon Adele Farina. If we create a gold-class patient assisted travel scheme in Western Australia, there probably is not a lot of incentive for the Department of Health

to maintain or improve specialist service delivery in our regions. I am certainly not one who advocates the notion that every service has to be available in every town, because it is just not possible. I am a realist, and I realise that there is a limit to our financial constraints. We cannot have an obstetrician at every hospital in the state, along with a specialist anaesthetist and the team that they need to be able to deliver babies in every hospital. It is just not possible. Therefore, we need to have a system that is able to deliver the specialist medical services that we can provide in the regional towns, supported by telehealth, which is in the process of expanding and ramping up services provided to regional WA, along with a recognition that some services are so specialised that in some cases we have very few specialists available in the state, and they will be based in our capital city or in one of our regional cities, so people will have to travel to seek their specialist services. I think there is overwhelming support for a review of the patient assisted travel scheme to look at how we can improve specialist health delivery more broadly to people living in regional Western Australia. I thank all members for their contributions.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.

STATE FORESTS 7, 14, 20 AND 56

Partial Revocation of Dedication — Assembly's Resolution

Message from the Assembly requesting concurrence in the partial revocation of certain state forests further considered.

Motion to Concur

Resumed from 15 October on the following motion moved by Hon Peter Collier (Leader of the House) —

That in response to Legislative Assembly message 29, the proposal for the partial revocation of state forests 7, 14, 20 and 56, laid on the table of the Legislative Council on Tuesday, 15 October 2013, by command of His Excellency the Governor be carried out.

HON HELEN MORTON (East Metropolitan — Minister for Mental Health) [12.26 pm]: The state forest revocation proposal tabled on Tuesday, 15 October 2013, relates to the construction of the Mundaring water treatment plant and the formal dedication, realignment or widening of three existing roads. The proposals require partial excisions from state forests 7, 14, 20 and 56, totalling 33.1 hectares. If the proposed excisions are approved, two unconstructed roads will be added to the estate managed by the Department of Parks and Wildlife as an offset for the excisions and to rationalise management of unused roads through state forest. The potential gain is around three hectares. In two of the proposals, the road widening will result in vegetation clearing. All four proposals have the support of the Forest Products Commission, the Department of Lands and the relevant local government authorities. They have also been endorsed by the Conservation Commission of Western Australia, the vesting body for state forest.

Area one relates to the proposed excision of 9.3770 hectares from state forest 7. The Water Corporation has requested the excision to rationalise the tenure of the Mundaring water treatment plant site, which is currently under construction. The site's tenure consists of state forest 7 and crown reserve 50999. Crown reserve 50999 is managed by the Water Corporation. The area is situated approximately five kilometres south of Mundaring. It is proposed to transfer the excised portion of state forest to the Water Corporation in freehold to formalise the tenure of the Mundaring water treatment plant. I am aware that questions were asked in some of the briefings that were undertaken in preparation for this motion and that some extra clarification was provided in response regarding this area around the Mundaring water treatment plant. Those people who were around the East Metropolitan Region a number of years ago when this site was being sought for the development of the Mundaring water treatment plant will know that it took a number of years to settle on, and a lot of community action and involvement to come up with, this particular site. I can remember going to a number of meetings in the Mundaring area at which people were voicing concerns about the variety of options being given for the siting of this treatment plant. In the end it was the site that was already occupied by the department. As part of the memorandum of understanding, the Water Corporation provided an offset package to the Department of Parks and Wildlife. It was agreed that the Mundaring water treatment plant would be constructed on the land occupied by the department's historic Mundaring office complex, which included an office and the depot. The offset package involved the relocation of the Mundaring office, the construction of a new office, and land for conservation.

The relocation and construction of the new Department of Parks and Wildlife office complex were completed by the Water Corporation in consultation with the department. The new office included an office and a depot replicating the functionality of the historic office with modern office space, vehicle parking and depot facilities at an approximate cost to the Water Corporation of \$15 million. A 3.25 hectare portion of reserve 25155, managed by the Water Corporation, is to be vested in the Conservation Commission of Western Australia as an offset, and managed by the Department of Parks and Wildlife. This portion of reserve 25155 is surplus to the Water Corporation's requirements and will be managed for conservation. This all relates to area one.

Area two relates to the proposed excision of 1.8121 hectares of state forest 14 situated approximately 1.5 kilometres south east of Dwellingup. The Shire of Murray has requested this excision to allow for the dedication of an existing private property access route known as Holmes Road. Holmes Road was constructed prior to 1990 and provides access to lots 1190, 1187 and 1188, which are privately owned freehold lands. The dedication of Holmes Road will formalise access to these lots and rationalise the situation prevailing on the ground by legalising the current access. I am sure that those members who have seen the diagrams of this will recognise that it is not going to make a big difference to very much at all. This proposal does not require the clearing of vegetation. If the revocation proceeds, an unused road on the eastern side of lots 1190, 1187 and 1188 will be closed and included in the adjoining state forest. The area proposed for addition to the state estate is about 1.7 hectares and will rationalise management of roads surrounding lots 1190, 1187 and 1188.

Area three relates to the excision of six separate portions of state forest 20, which have an area of 3.957 hectares. Main Roads Western Australia has requested these excisions as part of its upgrades to South Western Highway approximately five kilometres south east of Balingup. The proposed road reserve will be 60 metres wide to match the existing surveyed road corridor through private property immediately to the south. The widened road corridor will allow Main Roads to undertake the planned improvements to South Western Highway, but will result in some vegetation clearing. The native vegetation affected by the proposal was identified as primarily jarrah and marri forest with endemic understorey species. Main Roads commissioned an environmental impact assessment and an environmental management plan for this project, both of which were provided to the former Department of Environment and Conservation. Again, for those members who have seen the diagrams of this, the amount of land being taken is a narrow strip along each side of the road that will enable the widening of the road through the state forest to be equivalent to the width of the road that transverses private property.

Area four relates to Main Roads' proposed upgrades to Bussell Highway north of Margaret River and requires the excision of six portions of state forest 56, totalling 18.3141 hectares. Contingent upon the excision of these portions of state forest, a portion of existing redundant road reserve is to be closed and added to the adjoining forest estate. The area proposed for addition is about 1.4 hectares. This proposal involves the clearing of native vegetation consisting of a mix of native forest and introduced species that are part of radiata pine and blue gum plantations. Main Roads commissioned an environmental impact assessment and an environmental management plan for this project and both were provided to the former Department of Environment and Conservation. I believe that these moves being sought at the moment are very reasonable and I also understand that extensive briefings have taken place. Nothing contentious has come out those briefings, and as a result, I recommend this revocation proposal to the house and I ask members to support it.

HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral) [12.36 pm]: I rise to speak on behalf of the opposition on this issue. As the minister pointed out, these four parcels of land are in a range of areas around the state—some in the Perth hills and some in the south west. The minister said that the four excisions have been endorsed by a range of agencies, including the Forest Products Commission, the Department of Lands—I think she said—and a range of local government authorities, as well as the Conservation Commission of Western Australia, which, of course, is the vesting body for state forests.

As none of these parcels of land is in my electorate, I am certainly not across all of the areas, bar one, and that is the area near Mundaring Weir. I am very well aware of that issue because I spent quite a lot of time in that area earlier this year after my aunt passed away. She used to run the Mundaring Youth Hostel, which is just across the road from this facility. I have driven past it on many occasions, particularly when I was up there trying to look after my aunt's estate. I am also aware of this particular area because it is in the electorate of the former member for Swan Hills, my dear and departed friend Jaye Radisich. In 2002, when this issue of a water treatment plant in Mundaring was first being debated in the community, I was in the office of the then Minister for Environment, Hon Judy Edwards, so I am very aware of the community consultation—in fact, the community anguish and angst that was around this issue.

Hon Sue Ellery: Did Jaye say that to you?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: The former member for Swan Hills was certainly very vocal on the issue and she ensured that the views and concerns of her constituents on this matter were brought to our attention. Being in the minister's electorate, she would also have been very aware of this issue and the angst in the community, the community meetings and stories in the local paper. In fact, because of the prominence it gained, there were stories in *The West Australian*.

This brings me to the point that this water treatment plant has been on the books since 2002 and, in fact, it is essentially built. It is a bit concerning that the government is now coming to us saying that it wants this extra bit of land so that the water treatment plant can function properly. I cannot blame the minister; I dare say successive governments are at fault on this issue.

Hon Ken Travers: Only since 23 September 2008.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I was not around; I certainly was not in this place during the last Labor government, so I am happy to say that it was at fault on this issue as well. It should have made sure that this land was excised at that stage all those years ago. Of course, for the last five years, members on the far side have been in charge. They too should have brought something to the Parliament to ensure this land was excised. The minister said the agencies were consulted on this excision. Given the angst felt all those years ago, I hope and trust that the Mundaring community was consulted so that it is aware of this excision and is not too unhappy about it. I appreciate that, as the minister said, a number of offsets are attached to this excision. Whenever we take land out of state forests, it is very important that we create offsets and replace like for like, by replacing the revoked forest and putting more forest into the conservation estate. I will not say too much more about Mundaring. I have put on the record that I hope and trust there has been community consultation.

I refer to the other parcels of land, one of which is in Dwellingup, as the minister said, in the Shire of Murray; the shire requested that excision. The government is delivering on that request. The other two are state forest areas 20 and 14. Both relate to Main Roads requests. I again put on the record the opposition's support for these two excisions. I think it is important in regional areas where there are dangerous roads that people travel on quite frequently, and also that people die on, that as parliamentarians and governments we make sure those roads are safe. We must do all we can to ensure that lives are not lost in these areas. There are safety issues with those roads. I know, Madam Deputy President (Hon Adele Farina), you will be aware of these roads. I think it is important we address this issue and act to excise this land and ensure that these roads can be built as a priority.

I have copious notes on this issue but I am quite happy to place on the record the opposition's support for the excisions. It would be remiss of me not to say that a number of other excisions should have been made in the south west, and perhaps other members might seek to make the point on those issues. I again say on behalf of the opposition that we support the revocation motion.

HON LYNN MacLAREN (South Metropolitan) [12.41 pm]: I, too, support the amendment to excise parts of state forests 7, 14, 20 and 56. I express my appreciation to the minister and his staff and officers from the Department of Parks and Wildlife who went through these various proposals in detail with me in a timely manner. There is nothing in these proposals that concerns me at this point. I asked the officers for some additional information, which was provided to me yesterday, and that information reinforced my support for the excisions. I asked the officers whether any habitat trees would be impacted by the clearing, and I was assured they would not be. I asked for the Conservation Commission's advice, and that was provided to me.

The department seems to have done a very thorough job and nothing drew my constituents' attention to any concerns that the conservationists might have about this. It is important that whenever we revoke state forest, which is public land, we examine it carefully, so it is appropriate that it has come to Parliament for our consideration. The Greens support this revocation motion.

HON KEN TRAVERS (North Metropolitan) [12.42 pm]: Thank you, Madam Deputy President.

Hon Liz Behjat: Rolling your sleeves up ready for action?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I was getting a bit hot.

Several members interjected.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: When members finish their debate, they can let me know and I will start my contribution.

Hon Liz Behjat: Dress standards in the chamber are slipping; that's all.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Adele Farina): Order, members! Hon Ken Travers should not encourage interjections.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I always find these revocations interesting, because often the work has already commenced or been completed. I remember a couple of years ago a proposal to partially revoke forest alongside Gngangara Road, but the plant was completely built and had been operating for a number of years by the time the revocation came to Parliament. It has always intrigued me that we have a system that requires parliamentary approval for the excision of state forest, but we find the work gets done beforehand. If there was a habitat tree there, Hon Lynn MacLaren, it would be long gone by the time we debated it today.

The point I also want to put on the record—I am sure my good friend the member for Collie—Preston would want me to—is that we support not only this revocation motion, but also what is not in this motion today. I am talking about some of the revocations necessary to allow the upgrade of the Collie Coalfields highway. That has been promised for a considerable length of time, and when it does not occur, we are told that it requires excisions from, I think, state forests and national parks. I accept there are different processes for each area. In supporting this, I urge the government to bring forward those motions to the house. We have been told now for more than a couple of years that those roadworks near the turn-off have not occurred because excision from the state forest or national park is required. I want to put on the record that the Labor Party is keen for those works to go ahead.

Had those elements been included in this motion, we would have supported the motion with vigour. Those roads are required.

This debate highlights that from time to time we need to get a balance. There are issues around roads—we are dealing with that now—and around protecting state conservation. Sometimes we have to accept a trade-off between those two for the greater good and that is what we are doing. We need to do that for other projects. I do not know whether the government is in a position to tell us this afternoon when it expects those future motions to come before this place. Are we likely to see them before the end of this year? I am also interested to know from the government whether it can commence the works so we can get on with upgrading the roads on the Collie Coalfields highway. I would not be surprised if some of the work has started on the Mundaring —

Hon Helen Morton: It's built.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: It is built in Mundaring, but what about the three roads in the south west?

Hon Helen Morton: The bulldozers are ready to roll.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: They have not started to roll yet?

Hon Helen Morton: I am assured not.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Can the minister explain why one has been built and at the other place the bulldozers have not started? How can the bulldozers be on one piece of land before the excision, but not the other? I do not necessarily want to encourage the government to roll bulldozers out before the parliamentary process, even if it allows it. I would far prefer these sorts of revocations to be dealt with under the parliamentary process. It is well known that for most of this year this chamber has lacked enough business to keep members occupied and productive. These matters could have been introduced in this place and we could have dealt with them.

Hon Helen Morton: You will find those Collie road ones coming in the next term of government.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: In the next term of government!

Hon Stephen Dawson: We will have to bring it in!

Hon Helen Morton: I mean in the next session of Parliament; sorry.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I knew the government was slow, but even I did not believe that!

Hon Helen Morton: You do not have to worry about bringing it in; we will do it in the next session.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I can assure the member that they will be brought in in the next session of Parliament if they are not brought in during this session of Parliament, because, as the Minister for Transport in the next session of Parliament, I will make sure they are brought into the chamber at the first available opportunity.

Hon Helen Morton: Unfortunately, you will not have the chance to make sure!

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I am pretty confident I will! That is why I am happy to give that absolute guarantee to the house today if the current government has not got them in, but I hope we will actually get them in in the next year. It is a shame we cannot get them in this year, because it would be great to see the bulldozers going on that stretch of road. I think everyone in this chamber would accept that there are a couple of spots on that Coalfields highway that need to be upgraded. It is appropriate at this point in this debate to make it very clear that the Labor Party is keen for that to happen, so the government does not have to be nervous about bringing those motions in because there will be a fight. We will be ready to support those motions when they get here.

Question put and passed.

TAXI DRIVERS LICENSING BILL 2013

Committee

Resumed from 19 November. The Chair of Committees (Hon Adele Farina) in the chair; Hon Jim Chown (Parliamentary Secretary) in charge of the bill.

Clause 1: Short title —

Progress was reported after the clause had been partly considered.

Hon JIM CHOWN: A couple of questions were brought up about this matter in the last session. One was from me about the number of taxidriver's who have a working with children card. We looked into this at length first thing yesterday morning, but, unfortunately, the working with children screening unit is updating its IT program, so the black hand of fate has stepped in and the numbers of those taxidriver's are still being looked at. My advisers tell me that they hope to have them sometime today. At this stage I am unfortunately unable to give them to the chamber. It is just a matter of bad timing, not on my part I might add, but on someone else's.

The other question about working with children checks and how this bill will allow taxidriver's and licence holders to access that working with children registration was put forward by Hon Sue Ellery, the Leader of the

Opposition. I have taken advice on that matter and my advice states that the Department of Transport has started discussions with the working with children screening unit on the possibility of requiring taxidriviers to hold a working with children card. The purpose of the discussions was to better understand the benefits of a compulsory working with children check and how it relates to the existing fitness to hold a card checks; and to understand the resource implications for undertaking working with children checks for taxidriviers. There are more conversations to be had between the departments and their respective ministers on this matter. Hon Sue Ellery indicated that the Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004 would require amendment in order to make a working with children check mandatory for all taxidriviers and I have undertaken to obtain advice on this matter. My advice is that the Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act already creates a framework that would enable this to occur. Section 10(1) of the act enables a person who carries on, or proposes to carry on, a child-related business to apply for an assessment notice under the act. A child-related business is defined as child-related work carried out by an individual for gain or reward. Although driving a taxi is generally not child-related work under the act, section 6(1)(a)(xix) of the act enables it to be prescribed as child-related work for the purposes of the act. Having said this, we will not make policy on the run. The question has been raised as to whether it is desirable for taxidriviers to be required to hold a working with children card and we are looking at that. If the answer is yes, appropriate regulations can be drafted and implemented relatively quickly. A decision as to whether a working with children card should be mandatory is not required for this bill to be passed. I thank members for raising the issue of working with children checks for taxidriviers.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I thank the parliamentary secretary for the advice he has just given to the chamber. I accept that he does not want to do policy on the run.

Hon Jim Chown: That would be bad policy.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I have to say that I have given a lot of thought to the matter and I have talked to various people. It is a shame we are not able to put that provision in this legislation, but I accept the government wants to do more work on it and I certainly urge the government to do that. I think it would be a good starting point to give people some degree of assurance about taxidriviers. Like all things, even if a person has had a working with children check, it does not mean that they will not offend in the future, but it is a good starting point as a minimum test. I am pleased the government is looking at that and I hope that from time to time it will give us updates on how it is progressing with the matter. It is something I urge and I have certainly spoken to a number of people who I think accept that it would be a good process. One of the things about the working with children check is that it is not just a prosecution-based test; it goes beyond that and looks at whether other issues have been raised at various times that would give cause for concern about that person working with children, but still in a rigorous way. It will make sure that people driving taxis meet that high standard. As we were discussing the other day, I suspect most taxidriviers do child-related work for five calendar days a year, but how we measure that and how we would know is just about impossible. I appreciate that the government is working on that and I appreciate the view that the parliamentary secretary has put that that change can be made by prescribing it under this legislation and also by making changes to the regulations attached to the working with children legislation. I think that is pretty much the parliamentary secretary's advice. I appreciate that advice and I hope we can see that come to pass. As we know, there is plenty of time before this legislation comes into being to continue that work.

I note the time, but before we interrupted the debate previously, we had just started to talk about the complaints management system. I am reluctant to start that again before lunch.

Hon Jim Chown: Go ahead and start and we can finish it after lunch.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm

Hon ADELE FARINA: Yesterday, the parliamentary secretary indicated that dispatch would know whether taxidriviers had a working with children card, and so that information could be obtained from dispatch. Today, the parliamentary secretary has indicated in answer to a question by Hon Ken Travers that the working with children screening unit computers are down and he is not able to advise who does or does not have a working with children card. During the lunch break, I thought dispatch would know so I phoned dispatch to ask them. I contacted two taxi companies. The first one told me that none of its drivers has a working with children card. The other company told me that some of its drivers are in the process of obtaining a working with children card but none of their drivers currently has one. I think that raises some serious concerns in my mind about the information that has been provided by the parliamentary secretary in answer to the questions that have been asked to date. I do not think it is good enough. We are here in this chamber on behalf of the people of Western Australia. Our job is to scrutinise a bill. We do that by asking questions and we expect answers to be provided that assist in that process. I do not think we have got them from the parliamentary secretary to date. I would like the parliamentary secretary to explain whether, in fact, any taxidriviers currently have working with children cards. If, as dispatches of two companies have told me, there are not, why did the parliamentary secretary indicate to the chamber that there are taxidriviers with working with children cards currently working?

Hon JIM CHOWN: In response to the question, the department is aware that at least 20 taxidrivers have a working with children card. At this stage, Swan Taxis does not have a consolidated list; another company's dispatch is trying to update its list on which drivers have a working with children card. That is the reason we have gone to the working with children screening unit to try to ascertain the correct number of taxidrivers who have a working with children registration card.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: I do not believe that every taxidriver should have a working with children card; however, I do believe that there should be a pool of drivers, specifically when they drive, say, children who are under state protection or child protection. Sometimes those children use taxis—sometimes accompanied and sometimes not. I was always led to believe that if a taxi picked up a child who was in state care, the taxidriver would have a working with children card. It would make sense that some taxidrivers had working with children cards and were asked specifically when a taxi was booked; but it does not make sense to make a blanket ruling that every taxidriver should have a working with children card when it is unnecessary. When my children were small and I used a taxi, my children were with me. Not every child who gets into a taxi is alone. If that is going to be investigated in the future—I certainly hope it is—Swan Taxis and other taxi companies should have a pool of drivers with working with children checks. That is the way forward.

Hon ADELE FARINA: To clarify for the parliamentary secretary, I phoned the two major taxi companies in Perth. One said that its drivers do not have working with children cards and that some drivers are in the process of getting them but they have not obtained the card yet. The other company said that it does not monitor that, it does not have that information and none of its drivers have that card, but it assured me that it would send out a responsible driver. I would hope that all the drivers are responsible. That response did not give me a great deal of confidence. I am concerned about this because yesterday I asked what would happen if a person wanted to book a taxi with a taxidriver with a working with children card, and how would the parliamentary secretary be sure that a taxidriver working on a particular shift would have a working with children card and be able to take the children if the Department of Transport does not keep those records. In response to the parliamentary secretary's answer to an earlier question, I asked whether the department has this information and the parliamentary secretary said no. I then asked how a person would know whether they could get a taxidriver with a working with children card, and the parliamentary secretary said that dispatch will know. I phoned two dispatches and they do not know, and they cannot assure me. One said, categorically, that it could not send me a driver with a working with children card because it did not have any; the other one said that it would send me a responsible driver, and, like I said, I would expect all drivers to be responsible.

I think there is a real issue about the standard of answers the chamber is being provided. It is important that in the job of scrutinising legislation, when questions are asked, the chamber gets correct answers. Yesterday, I certainly got the impression that there are taxidrivers with working with children cards. I was a bit unsure about how I could make sure that any time I wanted to book one, there would be one working on shift because the Department of Transport does not require the agencies to ensure that they have drivers with the cards on all shifts. When I asked those questions of the parliamentary secretary, he assured me that dispatch would know, yet dispatch of the two large taxi companies in Perth that I called do not know and cannot provide at this point in time a driver with a working with children card. This is a serious issue. The chamber has been given information that is not accurate. The parliamentary secretary needs to explain this, because those two companies, one of which he mentioned, are saying that they have 20 drivers with a working with children card, yet when I phoned, dispatch told me they do not have any.

Hon JIM CHOWN: I am not sure who in the dispatch offices the member contacted, but I would have to query who the member was talking to about this matter in a phone call during lunch time. My information is that the request from a client to a dispatch office for a driver with a working with children card will be sent out over the wires and a responsible driver with that particular card will respond to the job.

Hon Adele Farina: But they don't have any.

Hon Ken Travers: But how do they know that the person responding has it?

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Order!

Hon JIM CHOWN: One of the benefits of this bill, as I explained earlier, will clear up this issue and will put in place through regulation a condition on the licence of taxidrivers that they have a working with children card.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I thought the parliamentary secretary said before lunch that he was looking at the idea of doing that. Is he now saying that it is definitely going to happen? The parliamentary secretary needs to be clear about what he is telling the chamber.

Hon JIM CHOWN: The information from my advisers is that under this bill we will be able to implement a system that will record on the licence of taxidrivers that they have a working with children card. We will also be able to request that taxi dispatch services record a list of those drivers who have that criterion on their licence.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I appreciate those comments from the parliamentary secretary. I draw the parliamentary secretary's attention to what he told us, and I will quote from page 40 of the uncorrected version of *Hansard* on Tuesday, 19 November. After Hon Adele Farina asked the parliamentary secretary how many drivers had the authority, the parliamentary secretary said —

The answer is quite simple; the taxi dispatch services have a list of the operators who hold that particular card.

I understand from the parliamentary secretary today that that may not have been a completely accurate statement. He is now telling the chamber that once this bill is passed, a system will be established for those taxi services to have that list. It is not currently in place but it will be put in place once the bill is passed; is that correct?

Hon JIM CHOWN: I am not the sort of person to blame other people for statements made but Hon Ken Travers is correct. After some discussion with my advisers, I am prepared to state that I had incorrect advice about the taxi dispatch services having a known list of drivers with the particular card in question.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I have to say that I have a bit of a concern. As education minister, I believe it is imperative that we provide students with the capacity to request a driver with a working with children card when they seek to use a taxi—if that is the wont of the parent, teacher or whomever. I think that is most imperative. Students who are boarders, for instance, use taxis and may want a taxidriver with a working with children card. I feel more comforted by what the parliamentary secretary said just now in that this legislation will move to a system for each taxi company to have a list of drivers with a working with children card so that someone requiring such a driver will have access to that driver. I want to get some clarification on that matter, as I understand that is what the parliamentary secretary said last week. I am very comforted by that and I will certainly be having a discussion with the Minister for Transport to ensure that we process that situation so that companies can have a list and no doubt —

Hon Ken Travers: Would you support an amendment from the opposition to that?

Hon PETER COLLIER: No. As I said, what the parliamentary secretary has said has comforted me. I had the same concerns as honourable members opposite. They are quite valid concerns and I do not believe anyone would disagree with them. If someone wants a taxidriver with a working with children card, the taxi company should be able to facilitate that, and I understand this legislation will provide that.

Hon ADELE FARINA: I have a further question to the parliamentary secretary. When did he become aware that the answer he provided to the chamber on 19 November was inaccurate?

Hon JIM CHOWN: Just now, Mr Deputy Chair.

Hon ADELE FARINA: My understanding is that during consideration of the bill on 19 November, the parliamentary secretary indicated that he would get advice on this matter and come back to the chamber. Therefore, at no time during that intervening period when he sought advice from the department and from the minister's office was that information in the statement the parliamentary secretary made in the chamber corrected.

Hon JIM CHOWN: The reality is that the department sought information, as I said previously, from the working with children screening unit so that a definitive list would be available for this committee.

Hon Adele Farina: I am sorry; I cannot hear you.

Hon JIM CHOWN: The reality is that the department went straight to the working with children screening unit for an exact list as opposed to the approximate list that would be available for this committee.

Hon DARREN WEST: As a parent with a boarder at a Perth boarding school, who is one of several hundred or even thousands of students who may be affected, I find it quite extraordinary that I can get more comfort from the Minister for Education on this matter than I can get from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport. I think there are grounds to move an amendment to this bill so that this check is mandatory for taxidrivers who pick up students from boarding schools and other schools. Boarding schools are somewhat different because the parents are a long way away. At other schools, parents may be close by and may even help put the students into the taxis. I note that with the changes to the education system, 11-year-old students will be attending boarding schools. They may be considered a vulnerable group of passengers. I think an amendment to make this mandatory is in order.

Hon JIM CHOWN: It is totally unnecessary to move an amendment to this bill. If the honourable member had been in the chamber a while ago, he would have heard me explain that this matter can be addressed by way of regulation, which it will be.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I appreciate the comments from Hon Adele Farina, the parliamentary secretary and the Leader of the House because I think this is a really important issue. I think I now understand the situation; that is, what we were told the other night is not correct. The parliamentary secretary is now confident that the working

with children legislation can be amended by way of regulation. I get the sense, and I am comforted by the words of the Leader of the House, that there will be a strong advocate in cabinet for a movement towards requiring working with children checks as part of this process. Nonetheless, I think it highlights what we were told the other day. We can now move on. Unless other members want to talk about working with children checks, I might try to get onto the complaints system.

Hon JIM CHOWN: On that matter, if the numbers come through from the working with children screening unit before this bill passes through this chamber, I will be more than happy to put —

Hon Ken Travers: Did you try to get them from the taxi dispatch services and that is why you have gone to the working with children unit?

Hon JIM CHOWN: As I said previously, for a definitive, exact list, the right place to go is the working with children screening unit.

Hon Ken Travers: Could the TDSs not provide it to you?

Hon JIM CHOWN: I have just been advised that those parties followed up initially but, as I said, the working with children screening unit is the place to get a definitive list.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: If both were followed up, am I correct in saying that the taxi dispatch services advised the government that they did not have that list? If that is the case, why was the chamber not notified of that at the beginning of today's session?

Hon JIM CHOWN: This is evolving as we go forward.

Hon Ken Travers: Really!

Hon JIM CHOWN: I am only receiving the advice that I am relating as I stand here and respond to the questions.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I genuinely want to move on to complaints, but I have put a pretty clear question to the parliamentary secretary. In light of the seriousness of what we are discussing, did people in the government seek advice from the taxi dispatch services and were they advised that they did not hold that information? If that is the case, why did the parliamentary secretary not correct the record at the commencement of today's proceedings on this bill?

Hon JIM CHOWN: Because I was only informed in the last five to 10 minutes.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I will leave it at that, but I think members in this chamber understand the points that have been made on this issue this afternoon.

I turn to complaints. I think I mentioned in my contribution to the second reading debate the issues that concern me about this bill. In theory, we have a rigorous licensing regime, although some of the comments the parliamentary secretary made the other day started to make me question whether there is much of a change from the current situation, but we can deal with that when we get into the detail. I would like to hear from the parliamentary secretary how the government expects the complaints system will operate once this legislation is in place. There are two elements to this legislation. One element is prescribed statutory offences. I have no doubt that the department will know whether those offences have occurred, because even if it is not the agency that is handling the prosecution of those offences, it would need to be involved in the prosecution of those offences. I am very comfortable with the three statutory offences. There will then be a potential for prescribed offences. How will the department know that a taxidriver has been charged or is in breach of a prescribed offence? Then there is the process for disqualification or cancellation of licences through the demerit points system that will be established under this bill. I am keen to understand exactly how the department will become aware of drivers who have committed offences that would warrant them losing a demerit point or demerit points, unless there is a significant change in the current complaints system. For the benefit of members, if they were not here earlier, at the moment low level complaints go to the taxi dispatch services and higher level complaints may go to the department, but they are normally referred to the police. If they come into the department, the low level complaints are referred to the taxi dispatch services. I understand that when the complaint goes to the department, but if the complaint goes directly to either the police or the taxi dispatch services, how will the department be aware of the offences that would then cause some disciplinary reaction to be taken under this legislation?

Hon JIM CHOWN: Provisions in the Taxi Act 1994 and the Transport Co-ordination Act 1966 allow for conditions to be imposed or regulations to be made that will manage the recording and reporting of complaints. These powers can be used to ensure that the department has visibility of complaints made against drivers of taxi vehicles. To ensure that these heads of power can be used effectively, the department is developing new IT systems that will allow for the integration of complaints data from larger taxi dispatch services, for the online recording of complaints from smaller dispatches and country operators, and for online complaints lodged from the general public. The department currently sees information about driver complaints from the larger taxi

dispatch services, but these new systems will greatly extend visibility to include all players. Patterns of driving behaviour will be able to be identified and appropriate action taken. A lot of work has been done over the last 18 months or so to improve the working relationship with dispatch services as well as country operators. The department is receiving considerably more cooperation in this area than it has previously. At this stage prescribed disqualification offences will be offences under the bill, so the CEO's officers will be laying the charges. Also, clause 51 will require the Commissioner of Police to tell the CEO when charges are laid prior to this.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I know that the parliamentary secretary is labouring under the flu at the moment, but it is incredibly hard to hear what he is saying. This may be because he is going a wee bit too fast, his microphone is not on or there is background noise in the chamber. If we could keep an eye on all three things, it would be helpful.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: The microphone should come on when I give members the call, but I will keep an eye on that.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Am I correct in understanding that the parliamentary secretary said that the government intends to change the way in which complaints about taxidriver are handled and it will now be a requirement for taxi dispatch services and regional taxi operators to inform the department whenever a driver has been alleged to have breached an offence for which demerit points could be accrued under this legislation?

Hon JIM CHOWN: We will require all operators of taxi dispatch services to compile all related driver complaints.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The parliamentary secretary said "compile". Does that mean they will have to compile and keep records that will be available to the department or compile and transmit to the department in a timely manner any complaints received about drivers?

Hon JIM CHOWN: The department will have access to the dispatch officer systems and it will have the ability, through the new system, to look at all the complaints that are lodged. I understand that "dispatch operator data" is the correct terminology.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I appreciate that, but the two largest taxi dispatch operators in Perth have a highly controlled electronic system that would lend itself to that process. I get that. In many regional centres, a couple of operators use electronic taxi dispatch services, automated services and the like, but many are very small operations and the bookings and everything else are done via a phone call and two-way radio contact with the driver. Is the parliamentary secretary saying that those smaller operators will be required to set up an electronic system that the department will have access to?

Hon JIM CHOWN: The department intends to build an online system for small operators to lodge complaints. Obviously, that online system will be available to small operators in regional Western Australia.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I do not want to labour the point, but the parliamentary secretary used slightly different language. He said that it "will be available". Will it be compulsory for small operators to use that consolidated database?

Hon JIM CHOWN: The answer is yes.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I look forward to hearing from the regional operators when the department tells them that. I wonder whether there has been any consultation on that issue, because many operators are very small and, in many cases, the operator is actually the taxidriver. I appreciate that.

Is it the intention that when those complaints are entered into the database, the department will look at that data and issue infringement notices? How will that work? Will the department monitor that database regularly and, if there are complaints about certain drivers that warrant the accrual of demerit points, then issue infringements for offences that warrant the accrual of demerit points?

Hon JIM CHOWN: Obviously, the department will monitor these complaints rigorously and apply penalties as appropriate for infringements that have occurred.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I will leave the rest of my questions about exactly how the process for the complaint system will work until we get to the specific clauses.

My final question in this area is: do we have an idea of the cost of the system and who will be responsible for that cost? Will it be the department or will the operators be charged on a fee-for-service basis? If we know the cost and the department will pick it up, does the department have a budget allocation for that?

Hon JIM CHOWN: Yes, a budget is available for this process. In 2013–14, \$2.871 million has been allocated, and for 2014–15, \$805 000 has been allocated.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Just out of interest, how much of that is from the taxi industry development fund and how much is from the consolidated account?

Hon JIM CHOWN: The budget amounts just stated will come out of the consolidated fund.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I have a couple of questions. I agree with Hon Ken Travers that we can pursue this issue when we get to the specific clauses of the bill. I have a couple of preliminary questions about the various offences and how they are categorised. When we were given the draft code of conduct two days ago when we recommenced the debate in this place, the first clause I turned to was clause 9, which is about the offences. I imagine that the operator of a taxi company or a taxidriver, who expect these changes to take effect in the near future, would be very interested to know exactly how this legislation will work. I draw the attention of honourable members to the point I made in my contribution to the second reading debate about the multicultural nature of our taxidiving community and the fact that, for many taxidrivers, English is not their first or, indeed, even their second language. When I looked at that section on offences, I found that it is not really a draft document at all because it starts off by stating “Introductory text on what offences are and how they are to be prosecuted.” I am not sure that counts as a draft, because there is no information in there. We go back to the information we have already collated.

I want to pursue a couple of points that Hon Ken Travers made about the way that complaints are logged at the moment compared with what the practice is envisaged as being after this bill is passed. In going through the background material to this bill, I noticed that in answer to a question asked in this place in November 2011 by Hon Ken Travers to the Minister for Transport via the Minister for Finance, there was a huge disparity in the types of complaints that are logged year by year. For instance, in various categories A to H, which is eight different categories of complaints, only four of them had a significant number of complaints registered against them. The first was overcharging. The second was poor geographical knowledge. The third was inappropriate language and the fourth was inappropriate behaviour. But the categories of poor English, wrong tariff, use of mobile phone or other distraction while driving and sexual assault, basically, had zero—sorry, that is not the case for sexual assault because the minister answered by saying that that is a police matter and the Department of Transport does not keep statistics on it. But for the categories of poor English, wrong tariff and use of mobile phone or other distraction while driving, zero complaints were registered in all the five years from 2007 to 2011. I would like to ask the parliamentary secretary how this data is compiled and how that will change after this bill passes through Parliament.

Hon JIM CHOWN: Under the current system the parameter for complaints has a very broad spread. There is nothing specific about what complaints can be dealt with other than criminal acts that happen in a taxi. Under this new system under this bill there will be rationalisation of the current system, so a list of quite specific issues that are deemed to be worthy of being dealt with will be put in place.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I still do not quite understand how the existing system works because I am trying to compare it with the new system. These, as I understand it, were complaints that were lodged with the Department of Transport. The parliamentary secretary’s answer focused on the way the taxi companies collect the information. What exactly does the logging of complaints up to this point entail?

Hon JIM CHOWN: The system that is in place now is that complaints are either emailed or phoned to the department. As I said, the department has a list of 45 parameters and complaints are currently investigated by the department once received either by phone or email.

Hon Ken Travers: Can we get a copy of the 45 parameters?

Hon JIM CHOWN: Under the new system as laid out, and as I have already stated, there will be more specific sections that complaints can be dealt with.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: If I can recap to check that I have understood what the parliamentary secretary is saying. Is the parliamentary secretary saying that there are currently 45 categories of complaints?

Hon JIM CHOWN: Under the current system, complaints are dealt with under the regulations of the various acts that apply to taxis and taxi licence holders and under the new system, they will be categorised under the new regulations pertaining to the act.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I am sorry; I am acutely aware the parliamentary secretary is struggling with his respiratory system, and I do not want to add to his distress.

Hon Jim Chown: It is all right.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: With the parliamentary secretary’s permission, I shall plough on.

Hon Jim Chown: Go ahead.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: That is not really answering my questions, is it?

Hon Jim Chown: No.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I am glad you agree! I thought it was just me.

Hon Jim Chown: We will get there.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: The parliamentary secretary's answer then is that the current complaints system is dealt with by the current regs and the new system will be dealt with by the regs that we have not seen yet. That does not help me very much. Where did the 45 come in? The parliamentary secretary mentioned the number 45.

Hon JIM CHOWN: That was a random estimate from my officer, which still does not answer the member's question.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Can the parliamentary secretary table a random list? Pick a number, any number! I just want a feeling for what we are talking about here.

Hon JIM CHOWN: We can probably arrange for that to be done now if Aaron can leave here to go and arrange it. Is that possible, Mr Deputy Chair?

The DEPUTY CHAIR (Hon Brian Ellis): Have an attendant escort your advisor out.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Shall I move that we report progress, or something along those lines? I think it was the parliamentary secretary's suggestion that we report progress and then come back to this—or leave the chair until the ringing of the bells.

Hon Ken Travers: I think only the parliamentary secretary can report progress. I might ask one more question, if the parliamentary secretary is comfortable with that.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I will hold off then and give the call to the parliamentary secretary.

Hon JIM CHOWN: I am comfortable to keep going at this stage.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: If the house is not requesting me to leave the chair, I will carry on in committee and give the call to Hon Sally Talbot.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: If it is clear that the parliamentary secretary is happy to proceed without one of his advisors, we will proceed on that basis.

Hon Ken Travers: If we end up on clause 1, we can defer the consideration of clause 1 and if we run out of questions, we can come back to it—if that is all right.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: As long as I can come back and pursue this point at a future stage of the debate.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I am quite heartened to hear the parliamentary secretary say that there is going to be a significant overhaul of the complaints system. I am sure members in this place are sick of me raising the question about the complaints mechanism for taxis. It is certainly an issue I have raised and pursued on numerous occasions as it is an area in which I have some concern. I do welcome the advice to the chamber today that as part of this legislation there is an intention to overhaul the complaints system. I am keen to understand that more. The question I ask is: if that is the case, why is that not part of this bill? If the purpose of this bill is to consolidate the issues around driver licensing and the whole regime through which we deal with drivers, why is that element not contained within this bill so that there is a uniform system? One of the difficulties that I have, when we get into things such as definitions, is that in some cases there are three different definitions that will be operating—one in this bill, one in the Taxi Act 1994 and one in the Transport Co-ordination Act 1966. It strikes me that it would have made sense to put that whole complaints regime in as part of the taxi licensing. Is there a policy reason why that is not part of this legislation?

Hon JIM CHOWN: Hon Ken Travers makes a reasonably valid point; however, we are here today to deal with the occupation of being a taxidriver and that is what the bill is about, as opposed to dispatch services and taxi services and how they operate either in the metropolitan area or regional Western Australia. Regional operators are regulated under the Taxi Act 1994 and the Transport Co-ordination Act 1966.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Regional operators are not under the Transport Co-ordination Act 1966.

Hon JIM CHOWN: The Taxi Act 1994.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Is there a requirement for a taxi company that receives a complaint about a taxidriver to refer that complaint to the Department of Transport? If there is, where do I find that in the bill? I have not been able to locate it.

Hon Simon O'Brien: It should be in there.

Hon ADELE FARINA: I cannot find it; so it is at this point that I ask the question.

Hon Simon O'Brien: The member has had three days.

Hon Ken Travers: Maybe Hon Simon O'Brien should come to the table and assist the parliamentary secretary.

Hon Simon O'Brien: He is doing fine.

Hon JIM CHOWN: It is not in this bill. Taxi dispatch services are required to be registered under the Taxi Act 1994 and conditions are imposed on their operations under the Transport Co-ordination Act 1966. We have

the power to make regulations requiring bookkeeping and record keeping. The Transport Co-ordination Act 1966 states —

- (r) prescribing the records to be kept and documents to be carried by owners, operators and drivers of taxi cars; and

...

- (x) providing for the registration of radio facilities with the Minister and providing for the imposition of conditions on such registration by the Minister.

Hon ADELE FARINA: I do not think that answers my question, if I have understood and heard the parliamentary secretary correctly. My question was: if a taxi company receives a complaint from a passenger of a taxi service against a taxidriver, is there an obligation on that taxi company to refer that complaint to the Department of Transport?

Hon JIM CHOWN: I thought the member's original question was whether that is dealt with in this bill. As I explained, it is dealt with elsewhere. The member is now asking another question, I assume.

Hon ADELE FARINA: The answer that the parliamentary secretary provided did not talk about a requirement to forward a complaint to the Department of Transport. It talked about keeping a register of various things and a log and that sort of stuff. That was not my question. My question was: is there a requirement on a taxi company to forward to the Department of Transport a complaint against a taxidriver? The parliamentary secretary has indicated that that is not in this bill. If that is not in this bill, in which act of Parliament can I find that?

Hon JIM CHOWN: It is in the Taxi Act 1994, sections 20 and 29, and the Transport Co-ordination Act 1966, section 47ZF.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Did I hear the parliamentary secretary correctly when he said earlier that taxi dispatch services are regulated under the Taxi Act 1994 and the Transport Co-ordination Act 1966?

Hon JIM CHOWN: Country taxis are regulated under the Transport Co-ordination Act.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: That is right. But I am not aware of any requirement under the Transport Co-ordination Act or regulations for taxi dispatch services to establish or manage those services. The parliamentary secretary has said that taxi dispatch services will be the vehicle through which complaints are required to be lodged on the database. It comes back to the point that if we want to have a rigorous licensing regime for taxidriver that covers the whole state, surely we will need the same regime for country taxis. Is it the intention of the government to bring in regulations under the Transport Co-ordination Act for taxi dispatch services in regional areas?

Hon JIM CHOWN: As I understand the question from Hon Ken Travers, there is no intention to impose on taxi dispatch services in regional Western Australia that they uphold the requirements of this bill. However, under the Transport Co-ordination Act, operators in regional Western Australia are required to keep records and documents, and we can impose conditions on the holders of a taxi car licence that they comply with the requirements of this bill.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: If there is no requirement on country cabs, how will a passenger be able to make a complaint about the service of a country cab driver, particularly when the driver is likely to be the owner-operator of that country cab, and how can they seek redress for whatever has caused the complaint to be made?

Hon JIM CHOWN: In the case the member has just described, they can ring the department. With the new IT service that is anticipated, they can also go online and register their complaint. There are also regional offices of the department that they can contact with a complaint.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Is that the situation that exists currently?

Hon JIM CHOWN: Under the system currently, the only complaints system is by contacting a regional or departmental office. Under this bill, more stringent requirements will be put in place, including an IT system through which passengers can make their complaint online directly to the department.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: This bill will create the online complaints system—is that correct?

Hon JIM CHOWN: The implementation of this bill will ensure the development of the systems, as I have just explained, for online complaints.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: I cannot find anything in the bill that indicates the complaints process other than the relationship to the code of conduct. Can the parliamentary secretary show me from where in the bill the complaints process and the mechanisms for those will be drawn and whether that will be a regulation?

Hon JIM CHOWN: Things such as the facilities that the member has just described are never part of legislation, but it is part of the department's implementation process of a bill such as this.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: But we do have a rock-solid guarantee that there will be a complaints mechanism that includes an online complaints process in which customers will be able to lodge complaints at any time of the day from any location within Western Australia and have their complaints responded to within a reasonable period.

Hon JIM CHOWN: Yes.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: When will that new system commence and how will the parameters of that new system be determined? How do we get to have some input into the development of that? Are we going to have some input into the development of that?

Hon JIM CHOWN: The complaints mechanism is a standard information technology project and is expected to be available to the public around April 2015 when the enforcement provisions of the bill are activated.

Hon ADELE FARINA: I would just like to go back to the answer that the parliamentary secretary gave me previously about where I would find the requirement for a taxi company to pass on a complaint to the Department of Transport. If I understood the parliamentary secretary correctly, he said it is in section 57 of the Transport Co-ordination Act. Section 57 deals with the power of the minister to revoke or suspend a licence—okay, I thought it might be section 47.

Hon Ken Travers: It is section 47ZF, though.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Sorry?

Hon Ken Travers: It will be section 47ZF because all of the taxis are under section 47ZF.

Hon ADELE FARINA: It is actually section 47ZD, which lists a whole lot of things that taxi cars can be licensed to do or not do, but nowhere in that long list that runs over numerous pages does it actually state that there is a requirement for the taxi companies to pass on any complaints to the Department of Transport.

Hon JIM CHOWN: Just a point of clarification: was the member looking at section 47ZF or 47ZD?

Hon ADELE FARINA: I was looking at section 47ZD. If the parliamentary secretary is telling me that it is section 47ZF, which part of section 47ZF? My question is: if the parliamentary secretary is now saying that the provision in the Transport Co-ordination Act 1966 for taxi companies to refer all complaints to the Department of Transport for its action is in fact section 47ZF, can he tell me in which part of that section the requirement is? I am not clear whether any part of that section states that there is a requirement to do so.

Hon JIM CHOWN: Section 47ZF(1) of the Transport Co-ordination Act 1966 states, in part —

- (c) prescribing the conditions under which licences of any kind may be issued, renewed or transferred ...
- ...
- (g) with respect to the duties and obligations of holders of licences under this Part; and
- ...
- (r) prescribing the records to be kept and documents to be carried by owners, operators and drivers of taxi-cars ...

Therefore, under this act, we will be able to get the complaint information with regard to the complaints process in the Taxi Drivers Licensing Bill 2013.

Hon ADELE FARINA: I thought that the policy objective of the bill before us is to establish a dedicated occupational licensing law for taxidriver. Are we being told that the bill does not actually do that because we have to go to the Transport Co-ordination Act to see what is required for country taxidriver and that this is not about the operations of dispatch because there is no dispatch for country taxis? Does that mean that the bill does not achieve the stated policy objective of providing a dedicated occupational licensing law for taxidriver? We are now being told that section 47ZF of the Transport Co-ordination Act provides —

Without limiting the generality of section 60 the Governor may make regulations —

... with respect to the duties and obligations of holders of licences under this Part ...

That is supposed to provide sufficient power for the country taxidriver to be required to report any complaint to the Department of Transport. Is that the parliamentary secretary's position? Have I understood it correctly?

Hon JIM CHOWN: The bill before the house is the Taxi Drivers Licensing Bill and it deals with people who have a "T" endorsement on their driver's licence to drive a taxi. The Transport Co-ordination Act 1966 deals with people who actually hold a taxi licence—vehicles to operate as taxis.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Is the minister saying that in country areas there are people who own a taxi licence but do not actually drive taxis?

Hon JIM CHOWN: That is correct.

Hon ADELE FARINA: The other part of the parliamentary secretary's answer was that section 20 of the Taxi Act 1994 provides for the requirement for taxi companies to lodge complaints with the Department of Transport. Section 20(1)(g) provides that the director general may impose conditions on the operation of a taxi using specified taxi plates in relation to complaint resolution. I assume that is the provision the parliamentary secretary is referring to; is that correct?

Hon JIM CHOWN: Section 20 of the Taxi Act 1994 deals with the plate holder and section 29 deals with the dispatch service. Under section 20, there are requirements for the plate holder, record keeping and complaint resolution; under section 29 there are requirements for dispatch services. Sections 29(1)(d) and 29(1)(e) also provide for record keeping and complaint resolution.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Would the parliamentary secretary be able to table a copy of the conditions that the director general has imposed pursuant to section 20(1)(g) and 29(1)(e) in relation to complaints resolution so that we can be assured that there is a requirement for companies when they receive a complaint to forward that complaint to the Department of Transport?

Hon JIM CHOWN: I will be happy to provide by five o'clock this evening the typical requirements. Plate conditions on taxis vary, depending on the time they were registered, and the member would be aware that there are various types of taxis as well; but I will try to get something that is pretty standard.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Given that licences have been issued over a long period and the conditions that have been imposed vary over that period, how can we be certain that there is a requirement to notify the Department of Transport of all complaints received? What assurances are there that that is the case? If a complaint mechanism is provided for in the Taxi Drivers Licensing Bill, it should be incorporated in the bill so that it can cut across country and metro taxis regardless of the sort of licence and so that there is one place that clearly sets out the procedure for lodging a complaint and the requirements for the various parties. The system the minister is referring to seems to be long and protracted and people may struggle to understand how it works. I am not yet satisfied that there is a requirement on a taxi company to forward complaints to the Department of Transport. It is fine to note that the parliamentary secretary will provide some information at five o'clock that might enlighten us. However, do these conditions also set out the period within which the complaint is to be forwarded to the Department of Transport, and what the penalty is if a taxi company is found not to have forwarded a complaint to the Department of Transport?

Hon JIM CHOWN: It is important at this stage to state that conditions will be imposed when this bill is implemented to ensure that the complaint mechanism I have already described will take place.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Where in the bill currently before us is that made a requirement? I cannot find it. The parliamentary secretary says that all this stuff will be imposed on the passage of this bill, yet this bill does not contain any provision that requires to be done what the parliamentary secretary says will be done.

Hon JIM CHOWN: We will be imposing conditions under the Taxi Act and under the Transport Co-ordination Act.

Hon ADELE FARINA: So, the complaints system will be effective through the two pieces of legislation that are currently in place, not through the bill that is presently being considered by Parliament.

Hon JIM CHOWN: That is correct.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Therefore, on each occasion when the parliamentary secretary has indicated that as a result of this bill, we are going to do this, it is not really as a result of this bill because the bill is not needed at all to impose the complaints system but will be done under the two existing pieces of legislation.

Hon JIM CHOWN: The bill before this house is actually the impetus for improving the complaints system through the acts just stated.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Do the conditions that are imposed under the Taxi Act and the Transport Co-ordination Act requiring taxi companies—and in the case of country taxis, taxi owners—to refer complaints to the Department of Transport state the time frame within which the taxi company or the taxi owner is required to refer those complaints to the Department of Transport?

Hon JIM CHOWN: To respond to that accurately, we require the documents that have been requested that will, hopefully, be here by five o'clock.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Do those conditions also indicate whether a penalty will be imposed on a taxi company and/or a taxi owner who does not comply with forwarding that complaint to the Department of Transport; and, if so, what is that penalty?

Hon JIM CHOWN: Under the Taxi Act 1994, the penalty for a taxi dispatch service that does not comply with the conditions is \$5 000.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Could the parliamentary secretary point to that provision of the act?

Hon JIM CHOWN: It is section 29(2).

Hon Adele Farina: Is that of the Taxi Act?

Hon JIM CHOWN: Yes.

Hon ADELE FARINA: And which provision is it for country taxis?

Hon JIM CHOWN: It is section 56 of the Transport Co-ordination Act under “General penalty”, which states that for any offence against the act or against any regulation there is a general penalty of \$2 000.

Hon ADELE FARINA: I thank the parliamentary secretary. Where does it state in the act that noncompliance with a condition is an offence?

Hon JIM CHOWN: Unfortunately, there is no section in the Transport Co-ordination Act that will support the penalties. I can assure the chamber that when supporting regulations are drafted, consequential amendments will be made to the Taxi Regulations and the Transport Co-ordination Regulations for such an offence. Provisions will certainly be created if they do not already exist.

Hon ADELE FARINA: I am sorry to subject the parliamentary secretary to this, but I did not hear all of his answer. Was he saying that we are going to move an amendment at some future time to provide the power?

Hon JIM CHOWN: When supporting regulations are drafted, consequential amendments will be made to the Taxi Regulations and the Transport Co-ordination Regulations. Such an offence provision will certainly be created if it does not exist already.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Are we proposing to amend legislation through regulation?

Hon JIM CHOWN: No, we are proposing to amend regulations.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Are they regulations made under the Taxi Drivers Licensing Bill or another act?

Hon JIM CHOWN: There are no regulations pertaining to this bill as yet but there will be and there will be amendments to the Taxi Regulations 1995 and the Transport (Country Taxi-car) Regulations 1982.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Would the parliamentary secretary please indicate where in the current bill there is a head of power to amend regulations in other acts? I understand there is a head of power to make regulations. I am not sure that the head of power provides the power to amend regulations pertaining to other acts of Parliament.

Hon JIM CHOWN: There is no head of power in this bill because the head of power comes from the Transport Co-ordination Act and the Taxi Act.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I want to go back a fair way in the debate. The parliamentary secretary said some time ago that there is currently no capacity to make an electronic complaint to the department. I have never quite understood the difference between complaints and compliance, and I once did not get the answer I wanted because apparently there is some difference. I understand that one can go online and look at the department’s website, which has the capacity to lodge a compliance issue or concerns about taxis or charter vehicles by way of email, which I would have thought is an electronic lodgement. What is that and how is that different from what the government is proposing will be the electronic lodgement of complaints as part of the implementation of this bill?

Hon JIM CHOWN: The IT system that will be put in place will comprise an online form with the required fields for the various complaints to be included in the automatic population of the database. Part of that online form will require the person’s name, address and contact numbers along with the complaint they are making.

Hon Ken Travers: What is the difference between compliance and complaints?

Hon JIM CHOWN: Would the member mind asking the question on compliance and complaint again?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I am trying to understand the difference between a compliance issue and a complaint to the department. I understand that there are some differences in the way that the department treats compliance issues and complaints, but I would have thought they were one and the same. How does the department determine whether something is a complaint or a compliance issue?

Hon JIM CHOWN: Compliance is a breach of the law and a complaint is, for example, when someone complains that their taxi has not turned up on time.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Am I correct that complaints currently go to taxi dispatch services and compliance issues—such as if the regulations are not being met because the driver does not have his ID—go to the department? If a taxidriver has body odour or something such as that, does that currently go to the taxi dispatch service? Will that still be the differentiation under this regime?

Hon JIM CHOWN: The current system for compliance breaches is an email to the department. Under the new system, as explained —

Hon Ken Travers: But my question is whether compliance issues will still go to the department and complaints will still go to the TDS?

Hon JIM CHOWN: Under the new system, with the IT process that will be put in place, as I have said previously, people can lodge either compliance complaints or complaints with the department. The compliance issues will be addressed by the department and the complaints will be returned to the taxi dispatch services to be addressed. I assume that if they are carried out, the department will follow that up.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I guess when we get to that clause we can go into more detail about how that will operate. I have one final question. Again, it is an issue that I have long held. Will the online system be accessible to the compliance officers out on the road in real-time? Will they be able to get access to that electronic log? One of the things that would assist us to crack down on bad drivers is a real-time measure. I have asked about this issue in the chamber before. If someone cannot see a taxidriver's ID and they ask to see it, the taxidriver may get aggressive and flash something before their eyes that does not look like them. Under the current system the best that person can do is send an email or leave a message on an answering machine if it is on a weekend. As part of the new regime will there be the capacity for dealing with those complaints in real-time? It strikes me that if there is a suspicion that someone is driving a taxi without a licence, for instance, which is a serious offence under this bill, we should use the public as our eyes and ears and have compliance officers identify the location of that taxi through the taxi dispatch service so that they can physically pull over that driver and check the records. Is that something that will be available under this new system; and, if not, can we make it available?

Hon JIM CHOWN: Hon Ken Travers makes a very valid point. It is certainly the intention of this bill that the mobile on-road teams will have some sort of handheld device so that they can access as much information as possible.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Can the parliamentary secretary please clarify whether he indicated that compliance complaints are dealt with by the Department of Transport and complaints once received by the Department of Transport are handed back to dispatch?

Hon JIM CHOWN: The department will have full access and full view of the system. Anything that it receives that should be addressed by the taxi dispatch service will be put to the taxi dispatch service to deal with. The department will deal with any serious breaches of this legislation.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Why would a complaint be handed back to taxi dispatch to deal with when it is in dispatch's best interests to keep that taxidriver on the road earning income for the taxi company? The whole point of the complaint and penalty systems is that there is an independent umpire that can assess a complaint and determine if any penalties apply and if a taxidriver has reached the demerit limit of 12 whether any suspension or licence cancellation needs to follow from that. The investigation of complaints is to be given back to dispatch. Dispatch is not independent in this process. This does not make sense; the policing of complaints by dispatch does not fit in with the policy to raise standards that is behind this bill. This bill is not achieving its intended objectives.

Hon JIM CHOWN: We have just discussed compliance and complaint. Compliance is a breach of the law. I will use Hon Ken Travers's example of a driver with horrendous body odour, which is the kind of complaint that will, and should, be dealt with by the taxi dispatch services. Compliance issues and breaches under this legislation will be dealt with by the department.

Hon ADELE FARINA: If I were a passenger in a taxi and the taxidriver put his hand up my skirt and I lodged a complaint, would that complaint be referred back to dispatch or would it be dealt with by the Department of Transport?

Hon JIM CHOWN: That complaint would come straight to the department and it would be immediately referred to the police.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Could the parliamentary secretary please provide me with a list of complaints that will be dealt with by dispatch, a list of complaints that will be dealt with by the Department of Transport, and a list of complaints that the Department of Transport will automatically refer to the police?

Hon JIM CHOWN: There are no such lists. A breach of the act or the regulations et cetera will be dealt with by the department. Criminal Code matters will be referred to the police. The police will keep in touch with the department on those particular matters.

Hon ADELE FARINA: If I heard correctly, the parliamentary secretary indicated a list of things that would be dealt with by the department and a list of things that would be dealt with by police; he did not mention the matters that would be dealt with by dispatch. We are discussing this subject because the parliamentary secretary

indicated earlier that certain complaints would be referred to dispatch. I would like clarification of the sort of complaints that are to be referred to dispatch to investigate and make a determination on.

Hon JIM CHOWN: It is not a breach of the law.

Hon ADELE FARINA: If a taxidriver swore at a passenger, would that be dealt with by dispatch or the Department of Transport?

Hon JIM CHOWN: That matter would be dealt with under the code of conduct by the department.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Clearly swearing is not a breach of the law, and the parliamentary secretary indicated that anything that was not a breach of the law would be dealt with by dispatch. He has now indicated that swearing, which is not an offence under the law, would be dealt with by the Department of Transport. I am still very confused—what is being dealt with by the Department of Transport and what gets dealt with by dispatch?

Hon JIM CHOWN: I did state that swearing or abuse of a passenger is part of the code of conduct and that a breach of the code of conduct is a breach of the legislation, which would be dealt with by the department.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Is it that the Department of Transport will investigate complaints about anything in the code of conduct, and only behaviours not picked up by the code of conduct, which are not an offence under the law, will be referred to dispatch?

Hon JIM CHOWN: The member is correct. Anything dealing with the code of conduct or any complaint regarding a breach of the regulations, relevant acts or the law will be dealt with by the department. Other matters will be referred to the dispatch services.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Can the parliamentary secretary give an indication of what the other matters might be? If this is an act to set a standard for the industry and it is all to be prescribed in the code of conduct, what other matters might be the subject of a complaint that would not be referred to the department under a breach of the code of conduct, a provision of the act or a criminal offence?

Hon JIM CHOWN: The sorts of issues that would be referred to the taxi dispatch services are, for example, that the app to call a taxi on someone's iPhone did not work and the taxi was late; issues such as that. These are issues that the dispatch service should be made aware of, and it is probably in its best interests that it is made aware of them.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I want to be absolutely clear: any complaint that relates to a matter that is covered by the code of conduct will go to the department and will be dealt with by the department. Is it correct that a person who contacts the taxi dispatch company with a complaint that comes under the code of conduct will be referred to the department for investigation and a determination of the penalties that will apply?

Hon JIM CHOWN: The department will have visibility of all complaints and will be investigating those complaints that it believes need to be investigated.

Hon ADELE FARINA: What does that mean, exactly? A code of conduct prescribes the behaviour of taxidivers and the standard that they are required to operate under. Any complaint that is received by the taxi dispatch service relating to the code of conduct is required to be transferred to the Department of Transport, and then the Department of Transport will decide whether it investigates the complaint?

Hon JIM CHOWN: The department will investigate all breaches.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I want to go back to make sure I understand, because I think we have had four different explanations at various times throughout the debate. I want to get it clear so that we can move on. When a complaint on any matter that comes under the code of conduct is lodged, either with the department or the taxi dispatch service, the investigation of that complaint will be dealt with by the department and it will determine the penalties that will apply as a result of that complaint being found to be true.

Hon JIM CHOWN: The answer is yes

Hon Ken Travers: Fantastic.

Hon JIM CHOWN: But the penalty is determined by the bill.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I think that is absolutely fantastic. That is very different to what we were originally told about the way this bill would operate. It certainly complies with what I put forward; namely, that there needs to be a central way in which complaints are managed. I want to congratulate the government for taking on board the recommendations of the opposition in this matter. All complaints that go to the code of conduct or the offences that will be outlined under this bill, in terms of the behaviour of taxidivers, will now be dealt with by investigation and then determined by the department. I think that is fantastic. I put on the record that I congratulate the department for adopting that position. I think it is a significant movement from where the government was originally when this bill was introduced, so, congratulations.

I will just ask one other question. Earlier, the parliamentary secretary commented that swearing at a passenger would not incur penalty points. However, I note in the documentation that he provided to us, which gave a draft outline of some of the potential demerit points, one offence was behaving discourteously.

Hon Peter Collier: Discourteously.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Just as the Leader of the House said! One offence was behaving discourteously towards passengers and potential taxidriver—for example, shouting and referring to passengers in a derogatory manner. The suggestion was that that would incur four demerit points, although that could be too high. I would have thought that swearing at a passenger would fit within those criteria. I accept that four points might be too high, but surely it is appropriate to have at least some demerit points for that. Could the parliamentary secretary clarify that?

Hon JIM CHOWN: I agree with the member on this matter. As he is also aware, the code of conduct is still under discussion with the industry. From my perspective, swearing should be part of the code of conduct, especially swearing at a passenger.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Yes; and if there was a code of conduct for passengers, I would love to see it the other way as well! I want to be clear about that; it is a shame we cannot bring in a code of conduct for passengers.

Committee interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 6406.]

Sitting suspended from 4.14 to 4.30 pm

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

CATALYST SCHOOL, WANNEROO

823. Hon SUE ELLERY to the Minister for Education:

I refer to the Catalyst Curriculum and Re-engagement School in Wanneroo.

Can the minister assure the students and parents that this school will not be forced to close because of financial difficulties, and outline what he is doing to keep the school operating?

Hon PETER COLLIER replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of this question.

I wish to assure the honourable member, together with the parents and students at Catalyst School, that Catalyst has been supported in its endeavours to establish itself as a CARE school that operates at the minimum standard expected by the community. There are many aspects that non-government schools are required to meet to ensure that students receive an appropriate standard of education and care. Despite receiving the maximum funding available for CARE school students from the state and commonwealth governments, this non-government school has been unable to meet a number of registration standards. The school has been given ample opportunity to address these concerns. As required by legislation, I have indicated to the school that I am cancelling its registration as a non-government school. The school is able to appeal this decision. I have requested officers from my departments to develop plans for the transition of students into alternative arrangements if required, including the possible involvement of other CARE schools.

EDUCATION — BUDGET CUTS

824. Hon SUE ELLERY to the Minister for Education:

I refer to the minister's public comment that school principals were given all the information about 2014 cuts to school programs three months ago.

- (1) When were principals advised of the reduction of up to 10 per cent of teaching allocation for primary extension and challenge programs?
- (2) Were the principals advised in writing; and, if so, will the minister table the written advice; and if not, why not?

Hon PETER COLLIER replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1) Principals were advised of this change at information sessions regarding changes to funding held between 23 August 2013 and 6 September 2013. The presentation used for these information sessions was made available to schools on 6 September 2013. As PEAC is funding that is provided to education regions and not school funding, the Department of Education advised regional executive directors of the 2014 resource changes on 22 August 2013. It is expected that regional executive directors will work with PEAC coordinators and schools to minimise the impact of the changes.
- (2) No, and not applicable.

PUBLIC SECTOR AGENCIES — PAYMENTS

825. Hon KATE DOUST to the Attorney General representing the Minister for Small Business:

I refer to the article in last Friday's *West Australian* titled "WA small business gets raw deal from big clients".

- (1) What steps has the Barnett government taken to ensure that all payments made by government departments are made within 30 days?
- (2) Does the Minister for Small Business have any plans to provide relief to small businesses struggling as a result of non-payment?

Hon KEN BASTON replied:

I answer on behalf of the Attorney General. I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1) The Premier's Circular 2009-3 "Timely Payment of Accounts by Public Sector Agencies" and the Treasurer's Instruction 323 state —

All commercial payments shall be paid within 30 days of the receipt of the creditor's claim, or within 30 days of the provision of the goods and services, whichever is the latter.

Complaints from small businesses about late payments by government agencies have not been received by either the Small Business Development Corporation or the office of the Minister for Small Business.

- (2) The Auditor General is conducting an audit of timely payments by state government agencies.

DRIVING TESTS — AGED DRIVERS

826. Hon KEN TRAVERS to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Will the Minister for Transport table copies of all the evidence he relied upon when making the decision to no longer require people aged over 85 years to have annual driving tests?
- (2) If no, why not?

Hon JIM CHOWN replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of this question. Unfortunately, it is not possible to provide the information in the time available and I request that the member place the question on notice.

FITZROY CROSSING WOMEN'S REFUGE

827. Hon STEPHEN DAWSON to the Minister for Child Protection:

I refer to comments made by respected Kimberley Aboriginal woman, June Oscar, in attacking the Barnett government in today's newspaper.

- (1) Can the minister confirm that the government will cut \$200 000 from the \$500 000 annual funding for the Fitzroy Crossing Women's Refuge?
- (2) Will the minister admit that any funding cut will jeopardise the centre's 24-hour crisis support and accommodation service?
- (3) What process and consultation did the department undertake before the funding model was changed?
- (4) Which other women's refuges will now face changes to the funding they receive and what will the changes entail?

Hon HELEN MORTON replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question.

- (1) Following a review of the family and domestic violence service system in Western Australia, a number of services were identified where demand is not being met, and others where there is underutilisation, including some remote safe houses. Where underutilisation of beds has been identified, a change of service model will be implemented. This will include an on-call safe house model that provides crisis beds and outreach services with brokerage funds that can be tailored to the specific needs of women.

The Fitzroy Crossing Women's Refuge has been identified as one of the remote services in need of a revised service model to support better outcomes for women and children experiencing domestic violence. The audited financial statements for Fitzroy Crossing Women's Refuge indicate that over \$341 000 of the funding has been utilised to provide salaries to staff for a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week service despite an occupancy rate of 13.6 per cent over a 12-month period.

- (2) No, there will be no loss of family and domestic violence crisis accommodation or services. As a result of the changes, services will be better tailored to meet community need and improve outcomes for

women and children exposed to family and domestic violence in Fitzroy Crossing and across Western Australia.

- (3) The Department for Child Protection and Family Support has undertaken a review of the family and domestic violence service system in Western Australia in partnership with the Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA), which is the peak body for family and domestic violence services in the state. The review included consultation to map and scope the existing domestic violence refuge system in Western Australia. In response to the review, a reform of the family violence service is being undertaken. This will include a redirection of funds to provide a new 24/7 coordinated emergency response in the metropolitan area; four specialist 24/7 emergency response services will take a lead role in coordination and facilitation across the metropolitan area. These services will be the key referral point for Western Australian police, the department's crisis care unit and the homelessness assessment and referral service; development of an on-call system in remote safe houses and incorporated outreach services and brokerage tailored to the specific needs of regional areas; and only staffing services in regional areas at night when the service is occupied. This began in 2012 and has occurred over the course of 2013.
- (4) Data from the specialist homelessness services collection from 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012 provided by the safe house services to the department indicates the underutilisation of four remote family and domestic violence safe houses. The data shows that there is a high vacancy rate and a low number of clients assisted. Clients stay for short periods of time and do not receive case management or an outreach service after exiting the accommodation.

The four safe houses and their occupancy rates are Halls Creek Safe House with an 18.8 per cent occupancy rate and an average stay of five days; Wyndham Safe House with a 7.4 per cent occupancy rate and an average stay of four days; Fitzroy Women's Shelter with a 13.6 per cent occupancy rate and an average stay of two days; and Roebourne Women's Shelter with a 25.2 per cent occupancy rate and an average stay of five days. This change is being implemented to achieve the effective utilisation of resources to maximise benefits for women and children.

Basically, the department is not prepared to continue to fund people to sit and wait at these places in case someone comes along. However, when somebody does come along, those services will be provided. Those resources will be provided when it is not being utilised to provide an outreach service into those communities for those people.

I would like to also indicate that probably one of the reasons that the occupancy rate for these places has been so low is the substantial work that has been undertaken in these communities around alcohol restriction. This is one of the good news stories of alcohol restrictions in those communities.

TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

828. Hon LYNN MacLAREN to the Minister for Mental Health:

- (1) As yesterday was Transgender Day of Remembrance, what action was taken by the minister to acknowledge the day?
- (2) Following the minister's support of the World Suicide Prevention Day and R U OK? Day motion, what action has been taken to audit services for transgender men and women?
- (3) What crisis accommodation services are available that accommodate transgender men and women in Western Australia?
- (4) What new crisis services will be introduced in this term for transgender men and women?
- (5) Does the new Mental Health Bill include provisions addressing the needs of transgender men and women?

Hon HELEN MORTON replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question.

- (1) I have been advised that as part of the Pride Festival, a candlelight vigil was held in Perth to acknowledge transgender people who have lost their lives due to transphobia—that is, discrimination based on their gender identity.

The state government, through the Mental Health Commission, continues to work with community organisations to improve mental health outcomes for people who are transgender and to ensure equitable access to appropriate and responsive services. For example, the state government's strategic policy for mental health reform, "Mental Health 2020: Making it personal and everybody's business", has an underpinning principle of diversity. Under the state government's suicide prevention strategy,

Gay and Lesbian Community Services received \$181 220 to develop and implement a community action plan for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community.

In October 2012, funding of \$75 000 went to GLCS to deliver the Opening Closets training program to mental health workers in both government and community-managed organisations and provide policy coaching to mental health services.

The Mental Health Commission provides recurrent funding of \$199 673 to the Western Australian AIDS Council for the Freedom Centre to deliver early intervention programs for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex young people.

- (2) All services funded by the Mental Health Commission must comply with the National Standards for Mental Health Services and are contract-managed through standard compliance procedures.
- (3) Crisis accommodation services provide services consistent with community need. No client is denied a service based on gender, culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, disability or the client's sexuality and gender expression. Services actively work to identify and eliminate any barriers clients may face in gaining support and work with them to provide suitable and acceptable accommodation.
- (4) The Mental Health Commission is continuing to fund the Freedom Centre and the Gay and Lesbian Community Services' Opening Closets training in 2013–14. Additional suicide prevention and crisis services have been funded, which are inclusive of transgender people. In 2013–14, funding to Lifeline of \$543 000 per annum over three years will provide crisis support, suicide prevention and mental health support services. Youth Focus will receive \$2.5 million over five years to help young people and school communities to overcome issues associated with self-harm, depression and suicide.
- (5) The Mental Health Bill contains a number of provisions that seek to ensure that diversity and individual circumstances are appropriately and sensitively recognised. This includes the needs of transgender men and women, although the word "transgender" is not specifically used in the bill.

Persons and bodies performing functions under the bill must have regard to the Charter of Mental Health Care Principles. The charter includes requirements that mental health services must treat people experiencing mental illness with dignity, equality, courtesy and compassion and must not discriminate against or stigmatise them; and recognise, and must be sensitive and responsive to, diverse individual circumstances, including those relating to gender, sexuality, age, family, disability, lifestyle choices and cultural and spiritual beliefs and practices. If a person or a carer feels that a service has not complied with the charter, a complaint may be made to the Health and Disability Services Complaints Office.

Clause 6 of the bill provides that a person does not have a mental illness merely because the person has a particular sexual preference or orientation.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Read the standing orders—short and succinct.

Hon Helen Morton: Ask short questions then.

The PRESIDENT: I was going to note that although I have no doubt about the relevance of the answer, I do have some doubt about the answer being concise as per the standing orders.

AMBULANCE SERVICES — BUNBURY

829. Hon SALLY TALBOT to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Health:

I refer to the accident, on 7 November, of the ambulance that was travelling from Australind.

- (1) Can the minister confirm that the ambulance was responding to an accident in Gelorup?
- (2) Can the minister also confirm that the reason the ambulance was required to attend was because there was only one ambulance rostered in Bunbury that day and it was attending other calls?
- (3) If yes to (2), why was there only one ambulance rostered in Bunbury?

Hon ALYSSA HAYDEN replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1) Yes.
- (2) St John Ambulance has advised the following. Yes, one ambulance was rostered on in Bunbury on 7 November 2013. This rostered ambulance was tasked on another priority call, a police operation. Although the Bunbury crew could have been diverted to the Gelorup call, the Australind ambulance and paramedics were closer and were therefore dispatched.
- (3) St John Ambulance has advised that ambulance rostering is based on maintaining appropriate response times across the region, not only for Bunbury. All the ambulances are utilised across the entire region.

as per the needs of the situation on a case-by-case basis dependent on priority. Bunbury is surrounded by numerous other ambulance sub-centres, such as Australind, Collie and Busselton, which have career paramedics working alongside volunteers. Volunteer-only ambulance sub-centres operate out of Capel, Boyanup, Brunswick Junction and Harvey. St John Ambulance Bunbury also has a patient transfer crew that operates seven days a week for non-urgent transport. The Perth-based rescue helicopter was tasked to the Gelorup incident but was stood down as the other ambulances from within the region were closer and were responding. Bunbury residents were not left without an ambulance service and no adverse incidents were reported in Bunbury as a result of this tasking.

ALLEN KEITH HUGGINS

830. Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH to the Minister for Education:

This will be concise.

- (1) Did Allen Keith Huggins ever worked for the Department of Education; and, if so —
 - (a) in which schools did he work and when; and
 - (b) in what capacity did he work?
- (2) If yes to (1), what efforts, if any, have been made by the minister to assist victims alleging sexual abuse by Mr Huggins during his time in education to come forward?
- (3) If yes to (1), will the minister follow the lead of the Department of Health and set up a hotline to assist victims alleging sexual abuse by Mr Huggins during his time in education?
- (4) If no to (3), why not?

Hon PETER COLLIER replied:

I thank the honourable member for the question and I will give her an equally concise response.

- (1) I am advised that the Department of Education has no record of an employee by that name.
- (2)–(4) Not applicable.

GRAIN FREIGHT NETWORK

831. Hon DARREN WEST to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Transport:

I refer to the grain freight network.

- (1) What is the total amount of funding allocated for works on the Quairading–York Road?
- (2) How much of this funding has been spent to date?
- (3) What works will be completed with this expenditure?
- (4) What is the time frame to complete the works on this road?

Hon JIM CHOWN replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of this question.

- (1) The amount allocated is \$10.5 million, which is additional to the unprecedented \$118 million committed to the grain freight network by the Liberal–National government.
- (2) There has been \$0.65 million spent to date.
- (3) The existing seal will be widened to nine metres over approximately 40 kilometres.
- (4) Mid-2015.

BURSWOOD CASINO — LEVY

832. Hon SAMANTHA ROWE to the minister representing the Minister for Environment:

I refer to page 78 of the Swan River Trust 2012–13 annual report and the funding provided from the Burswood Casino levy.

- (1) Which departments will receive the revenue from the Burswood Casino levy in both 2013–14 and 2014–15?
- (2) Will these departments transfer any of this levy revenue to other departments; and, if so, to which departments and what percentage of the levy revenue?
- (3) What is the estimated revenue from the Burswood Casino levy in 2013–14 and 2014–15?

Hon HELEN MORTON replied:

The Minister for Environment has provided the following response —

- (1) The Swan River Trust will receive \$3 million through the Burswood Casino levy in 2013–14 and will seek approval from the Burswood Park Board for \$3 million in 2014–15 for river protection projects that the minister approves charged with administering the Swan and Canning Rivers Management Act 2006. Given the amalgamation the minister has announced, funding in 2014–15 is likely to be received by the Department of Parks and Wildlife for river protection projects.
- (2) Approximately \$1 million is being provided by the Swan River Trust to the Department of Water in 2013–14 for the operation of four oxygenation plants on the Swan and Canning Rivers. This is approximately a third of the levy revenue that the Swan River Trust receives.
- (3) This part of the question should be directed to the Minister for Racing and Gaming.

MINERALOGY PTY LTD V SINO IRON PTY LTD

833. **Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE to the minister representing the Minister for Mines and Petroleum:**

I refer to the recent decision of Justice James Edelman in the matter of Mineralogy Pty Ltd v Sino Iron Pty Ltd in the Western Australian Supreme Court.

- (1) Are royalties paid to the state in respect of the Sino Iron magnetite project by CITIC Pacific Mining or Mineralogy Pty Ltd, and at what rate?
- (2) Are royalties paid to Mineralogy Pty Ltd in respect of the Sino Iron magnetite by CITIC Pacific Mining, and at what rate?
- (3) If yes to either (1) or (2), have royalty payments commenced?
- (4) Have exports of magnetite now commenced at Cape Preston?
- (5) If not to (4), why not?

The PRESIDENT: Is that not an ongoing legal case?

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: No, not that I am aware of.

Hon KEN BASTON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

The Department of Mines and Petroleum advises —

- (1) Royalties will be paid to the state government at the standard magnetite rate of five per cent.
- (2) This is a commercial matter between the companies.
- (3) Royalties to the state government have not commenced.
- (4) No.
- (5) There are contractual disputes between the companies.

PRISON OFFICERS — DISCIPLINARY CHARGES

834. **Hon AMBER-JADE SANDERSON to the Attorney General representing Minister for Corrective Services:**

- (1) For each of the years 2010–11, 2011–12, 2012–13 and 2013 to date, how many prison officers have faced disciplinary charges?
- (2) In each of the above cases, what were the charges for?
- (3) Of those prison officers pursued on disciplinary charges, how many of the charges have been sustained, not sustained and withdrawn?
- (4) For each of Western Australia's prisons, how many unauthorised mobile telephones have been found?

Hon KEN BASTON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. I answer on behalf of the Attorney General. The Department of Corrective Services advises —

- (1) Between 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2013, 93 prison officers faced disciplinary charges. Figures have not been disaggregated for each year to ensure that information does not inadvertently identify an officer.
- (2) Between 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2013, 93 prison officers faced a total of 146 charges for matters such as unprofessional conduct, disobeying lawful order, improper association, fraud, falsifying records, removal of keys, unauthorised access and misuse of force. Between 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2013, eight prison officers, who faced a total of 19 charges, resigned during the course of their investigation and/or as a result of disciplinary action.

- (3) Between 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2013, 102 charges were sustained. Between 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2013, 10 charges were not sustained. Between 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2013, 15 charges were withdrawn. Please note that charges were not pursued due to resignation of the eight officers mentioned above.
- (4) I ask the member to place this part of the question on notice.

SCHOOLS — TRANSPORTABLE BUILDINGS

835. Hon ALANNA CLOHESY to the Minister for Education:

- (1) How many Western Australian schools have more than 20 transportable buildings, and what are the names of those schools?
- (2) For each school in (1), how many transportable buildings are located at those schools?

Hon PETER COLLIER replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1) Three schools.
- (2) The schools and those numbers are: Comet Bay Primary School, 23; Meadow Springs Primary School, 23; and Mount Lawley Primary School, 21.

MAGISTRATES COURT — LEGAL AID FUNDING

836. Hon ADELE FARINA to the Attorney General:

- (1) In 2012–13 did Legal Aid WA provide funding for matters heard in the Magistrates Court?
- (2) How many applications for funding for matters before the Magistrates Court were received by Legal Aid in 2012–13?
- (3) Do Legal Aid funding guidelines prohibit applications for funding for matters in the Magistrates Court?
- (4) Given that some matters heard in the Magistrates Court carry penalties of imprisonment and therefore are serious matters, does the Attorney General agree that legal aid should be available for those people needing such aid when appearing on charges before the Magistrates Court?
- (5) When did Legal Aid stop providing funding for matters before the Magistrates Court?

Hon KEN BASTON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question and reply on behalf of the Attorney General.

- (1) Yes.
- (2) A figure of 3 276.
- (3) No.
- (4) Persons facing serious matters in the Magistrate's Court receive legal assistance through Legal Aid WA, to the extent made possible by Legal Aid WA's funding guidelines. It is a reality of all legal aid commissions nationally and in many, if not all, international schemes of legal aid that constraints in funding limit the number of people who can receive publicly funded representation.
- (5) The member is mistaken. Legal Aid WA has not stopped providing such funding.

QUAIRADING–CUNDERDIN ROAD — GRAIN TRANSPORT

837. Hon KEN TRAVERS to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Transport:

I refer to question without notice 780.

- (1) Has Main Roads advised the Shire of Quairading that it has three options regarding the culvert on the Cunderdin–Quairading Road?
- (2) Was the first option to place a six-tonne load limit over the culvert?
- (3) Was the second option to repair or strengthen the culvert?
- (4) Was the third option to replace the culvert?
- (5) Will the state government fund the second or third options?
- (6) If no to (5), how does the minister expect grain trucks—RAV 4/5—to use this road?

Hon JIM CHOWN replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of this question.

- (1)–(5) Yes, the third option is included in the proposed realignment being funded under the grain freight program.
- (6) Not applicable.

GOLDFIELDS–ESPERANCE DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION — REGIONAL BLUEPRINT

838. Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE to the minister representing the Minister for Regional Development:

I refer to the article in *The Kalgoorlie Miner* on Saturday, 16 November 2013, titled “Regional blueprint”.

- (1) Who was the decision-maker that let the tender to Creating Communities for the Goldfields–Esperance Development Commission regional blueprint?
- (2) Was a competitive tender process entered into for GEDC’s regional blueprint?
- (3) If no to (2), why not?
- (4) Was a consultant or person employed by either GEDC or the Kalgoorlie–Boulder Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ltd to identify, recommend or chose a suitable consultant to develop GEDC’s regional blueprint?
- (5) If yes to (4), who was that consultant or person?

Hon KEN BASTON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of this question.

- (1) Creating Communities was engaged by the Kalgoorlie–Boulder Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ltd under the terms of a memorandum of understanding between the chamber and the Goldfields–Esperance Development Commission.
- (2) No.
- (3) The Kalgoorlie–Boulder Chamber of Commerce and Industry was the engaging organisation.
- (4)–(5) It was done collaboratively between the Goldfields–Esperance Development Commission and Kalgoorlie–Boulder Chamber of Commerce and Industry in partnership under a memorandum of understanding.

WA NO INTEREST LOANS NETWORK

839. Hon STEPHEN DAWSON to the Minister for Child Protection:

I refer to the WA No Interest Loans Network Inc.

- (1) Will the minister please provide a breakdown of the number of loans issued through the WA No Interest Loans Network in the following years —
- (a) 2009–10;
 - (b) 2010–11;
 - (c) 2011–12; and
 - (d) 2012–13?
- (2) Will the minister please advise what the payback rate is on loans obtained from the WA No Interest Loans Network?
- (3) Will the minister confirm that funding to the WA No Interest Loans Network from the Department for Child Protection and Family Support will cease from 31 March 2014?
- (4) How does the minister propose this vital assistance be given to Western Australians in the future?

Hon HELEN MORTON replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question.

- (1) The number of loans issued in the following financial years are —
- (a) 2009–10, 1 028;
 - (b) 2010–11, 980;
 - (c) 2011–12, 772; and
 - (d) 2012–13, 542.
- (2) The percentage of loans which had all repayments made or were fully repaid are: January to June 2009, 87 per cent; July to December 2009, 90 per cent; January to June 2010, 91 per cent; July to December

2010, 97 per cent; January to June 2011, 95 per cent; July to December 2011, 88 per cent; January to June 2012, 84 per cent; July to December 2012, 88 per cent; and January to June 2013, 81 per cent.

- (3) The current contractual arrangement with WA NILS Network is ceasing on 31 March 2014.
- (4) As part of normal contracting processes, the Department for Child Protection and Family Support is currently undertaking a procurement process for the continuing provision of no-interest loans.

CONSTRUCTION SUBCONTRACTOR INVESTIGATION — REPORT

840. Hon KATE DOUST to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Finance:

I refer to the Minister for Finance's answer given to question without notice 637, which states that planning for the implementation of the recommendations in the subcontractor investigation report will be completed by 15 November 2013.

- (1) Has the planning and implementation of the report's recommendations been finalised yet?
- (2) If yes —
 - (a) what are each of the implementations; and
 - (b) what is the time frame for all the implementations to come into effect?
- (3) If no to (1) —
 - (a) why has the government been unsuccessful in reaching its own deadline; and
 - (b) when will the planning for the implementation be completed?

Hon PETER COLLIER replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question. The detailed information requested by the member was not available in the time provided.

Hon Kate Doust: That's the same as the answer to the other 53 questions I asked.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Wait a minute. It is requested that this question be placed on notice. Having said that and having read the question, I would like a little more clarity on whether it has been finalised. I will therefore seek some clarity on that and provide an update on Tuesday.

Hon Kate Doust: Any information from the Minister for Finance would be appreciated.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes.

AT RISK YOUTH STRATEGY REVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

841. Hon SALLY TALBOT to the Minister for Child Protection:

I refer to the "Department for Child Protection: At Risk Youth Strategy: 2011–2014" report published by the Department for Child Protection in December 2011 and to the statement at the end of that document, which states —

The 16 actions outlined in the Strategy will be implemented initially through the development of the *At Risk Youth Strategy Review and Implementation Plan* ... The Plan will provide a current status of each action and the proposed activities for achieving them.

- (1) Has the at risk youth strategy review and implementation plan been finalised?
- (2) If not, why not; and, when will it be finalised?
- (3) If yes to (1), where is the current status of each action identified in the strategy and the proposed activities for achieving them to be found?
- (4) Will the minister table the details of the current status of each action and the associated proposed activities for achieving them?
- (5) If no to (4), why not?

Hon HELEN MORTON replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3)–(4) The status of each action at the last formal review a year ago is detailed in the "Department of Child Protection *At Risk Youth Strategy 2011–14: Review and Implementation Report*", a copy of which I now table. A review for 2013 is currently underway to be ready early in the New Year.
- (5) Not applicable.

[See paper 1033.]

AUSTRALIAN HERRING STOCKS

842. Hon SAMANTHA ROWE to the minister representing the Minister for Fisheries:

- (1) When did the government become aware that Australian herring stocks had diminished to an unacceptable level?
- (2) What advice has the government received on the causes of the reduction in Australian herring stocks?
- (3) What consultation with industry groups has taken place to respond to this issue, and what further consultation is planned?
- (4) What action has the government taken to respond to this issue?
- (5) When does the government anticipate having an action plan to ensure the recovery of Australian herring stocks?

Hon KEN BASTON replied:

I am sorry that I do not have an answer for the honourable member at this stage.

METROPOLITAN REGION IMPROVEMENT TRUST FUND — BUSH FOREVER*Question without Notice 812 — Answer Advice*

HON HELEN MORTON (East Metropolitan — Minister for Mental Health) [5.04 pm]: I would like to provide an answer to Hon Lynn MacLaren's question without notice 812, asked yesterday, which was subsequently redirected to the Minister for Planning. Rather than read out the answer, I table the document and seek leave to have it incorporated into *Hansard*.

Leave granted. [See paper 1034.]

The following material was incorporated —

I thank the Hon. Member for some notice of this question.

1. The Western Australian Planning Commission (WAPC) is the decision maker for expenditure of the Metropolitan Region Improvement Fund.
2. The Department of Treasury provides advice to the Government in the establishment of expenditure limits through the State Budget as it does for all agencies.
3. The Department of Planning advises the Western Australian Planning Commission on this matter. In the 2012-13 Budget Paper No. 2, Volume 2 and again in the 2013-14 Budget Paper No. 2, Volume 1, it was explained that the Bush Forever Program (BushPlan) concluded in 2012-13. This represented the culmination of over \$100 million in urban bushland acquisitions, in keeping with the original policy decision of the Government led by Richard Court. Urban bushland can still be acquired under the normal acquisition program of the Western Australian Planning Commission.
4. Not applicable
5. There is currently no intention to raise the Metropolitan Region Improvement Tax rate for Bush Forever.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 373 AND 375*Papers Tabled*

Papers relating to answers to questions on notice were tabled by **Hon Helen Morton (Minister for Child Protection)**.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 356 AND 357*Answer Advice*

HON KEN BASTON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Agriculture and Food) [5.05 pm]: Pursuant to standing order 107(2), I inform the house that the answers to questions on notice 356 and 357, asked by Hon Robin Chapple of the Minister for Agriculture and Food representing the Minister for Regional Development on Tuesday, 15 October 2013, are expected to be provided on Tuesday, 26 November 2013.

TAXI DRIVERS LICENSING BILL 2013*Committee*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting. The Deputy Chair of Committees (Hon Liz Behjat) in the chair; Hon Jim Chown (Parliamentary Secretary) in charge of the bill.

Clause 1: Short title —

Committee was interrupted after the clause had been partly considered.

Hon JIM CHOWN: It is now five past five and we have the requested list for Hon Adele Farina and I would like to make it available to the opposition and to anyone else who would like to have a copy.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Is the parliamentary secretary tabling that document?

Hon JIM CHOWN: Yes, I am. It also includes a list of all the existing offences under the Taxi Regulations 1995.

[See paper 1037.]

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Can I just check with the parliamentary secretary that it is my random list that he has just tabled?

Hon JIM CHOWN: It is the member's random list, and the stated number of 45 is actually 42.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I will play for time for a moment, because I want to come back and ask the parliamentary secretary some specific questions about this clause. I was pursuing the question of how this information is currently collected. I am interested to know how it is currently collected because I want to get a sense of how the collection of this material will change. The point I was making to the parliamentary secretary is that although the Department of Transport reported in 2010–11 that 460 taxi-related complaints had been lodged, none related to poor English, none related to the wrong tariff and none related to the use of a mobile phone or other distraction. I am wondering how that information could be collated in such a way that half the categories come out as not registering any complaint against taxidrivers. Perhaps the parliamentary secretary could describe first of all how this information was collated and then talk to us about how it will be done differently.

Hon JIM CHOWN: Just on a point of clarification, is the member asking how all complaints are collated initially and then how those complaints are pursued or put into separate categories?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: This is why I was pursuing the question about the categories. If we just take that one year—2010–11—a total of 460 complaints were somehow lodged with the department. From what I understand from the information provided to other members in answer to similar questions, would it be correct to say that none of those complaints came from regional areas? I think the parliamentary secretary said earlier that there was no reporting from regional taxi companies.

Hon JIM CHOWN: If a complaint had been received by taxi operators in regional Western Australia, it would be one of the statistics.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Is somebody in the Department of Transport monitoring a phone line? How do these complaints come in? I refer again to the 460 that were received in 2010–11.

Hon JIM CHOWN: These complaints would have been received by the department either by phone or email or, in regard to regional areas, by people going to or phoning a regional department office.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I draw a comparison with the breakdown of offences in the question that I am referring to, which is dated 1 November 2011, relating to the 2010–11 financial year. The eight categories that I have referred to are poor English, overcharging, wrong tariff, poor geographical knowledge, use of a mobile phone, inappropriate language and inappropriate behaviour. We will leave sexual assault out of it because the answer provided makes it quite clear that that does not come under the same system. Clearly, those are quite different in substance to some of the offences on this list that the parliamentary secretary has now provided. The offences on the list that he has just tabled are things like failure to comply with notice or rectify defect and failure to return a driver bond within 14 days of the driver ceasing to be contracted, engaged or employed. They are not the sorts of complaints that a passenger is —

Hon Ken Travers: They are also not complaints against the driver. Some of these complaints are against the plates and passengers in fact.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I think we are confusing two categories of complaints here. I was particularly interested in complaints like poor English, overcharging et cetera, which will be lodged by the consumers of the taxi service—the passengers.

Hon JIM CHOWN: The member has a consolidated list of all offences—some are driver offences and some are operator offences.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I can see that Hon Ken Travers is bursting to follow up on this, but I have one more question. When the person is logging these complaints from passengers, are these categories the ones that the department is currently working with—those eight or nine categories—or does it look like a master list, which is more like the document that the parliamentary secretary just tabled?

Hon JIM CHOWN: There is some confusion about the list that the member has.

Hon Sally Talbot: On your part or my part?

Hon JIM CHOWN: That list was provided in response to a question received earlier.

Progress reported and leave granted to sit again, on motion by Hon Jim Chown (Parliamentary Secretary).

ROCKINGHAM COMMUNITY FORUM

Statement

HON PHIL EDMAN (South Metropolitan) [5.20 pm]: Yesterday, 6PR, Channel Nine and WAtoday held a community forum at the Gary Holland Centre in Rockingham. Earlier today Hon Ken Travers asked why I was not there; it is a good, valid question. First off, I want to apologise to the people of Rockingham, where my office is located. I have a lot of passion for that area; it is where I am bringing up my two young boys. Hon Norman Moore kept on trying to belt into me that Parliament is the first place that we have a duty to serve. Also, being the Whip, my duties are here. Unfortunately, I could not make it last night. I know there was one member of this house who did make it; I am not too sure if they had a pair or not, but lucky for them!

Tim McMillan was the facilitator of the forum last night. Both of my staff attended the forum. I was a little bit unimpressed by the fact there was a bit of bagging of the Liberal Party, me and my other colleagues in this house representing the South Metropolitan region. Basically, as members of Parliament, we cannot just go; our first duty is to this house. Saying that, I will put on record the topic that was discussed at that forum—I hope it is a concern of all members of South Metropolitan Region, the Greens, Labor and also us, the Liberals—that Rockingham is being labelled as “boganville”. It is really starting to get up my nose; what a load of rubbish. It is not boganville. Only a small minority in Western Australia seem to just want to pick on Rockingham. We have some of the best beaches in Western Australia. I am sure Hon Kate Doust will agree with everything I am saying about Rockingham because she used to live there.

Hon Ken Travers: I reckon Rockingham foreshore is the best public beach in Western Australia! It’s been transformed.

Hon PHIL EDMAN: I thank Hon Ken Travers for that; I appreciate that. It is the best. We have some problems in the area, like we have problems in all parts of every member’s electorate. I am not saying that it is picture perfect; there is always work to be done in Rockingham. However, it is certainly not boganville. A lot of work has been done: the shopping centre has been upgraded; we have a marina that hopefully will start soon; and a lot more quality restaurants and shops are opening in the area. For people to say that nobody wants to visit the area because of that tag, once again, is a load of rubbish. People who come down to Rockingham on weekends cannot even find a spot to park their cars. All the beaches and parks are full.

Hon Ken Travers: I caught the train and then the bus so I could enjoy the walk to Roger Cook’s birthday down on the foreshore.

Hon PHIL EDMAN: The number is 555 for the blue CAT bus, probably.

Hon Ken Travers: Yes, it’s fantastic.

Hon PHIL EDMAN: The member would have loved the train in the city centre, but we will not discuss that now.

Hon Ken Travers: I prefer the CAT!

The PRESIDENT: Order! Let the honourable member on his feet make his own speech.

Hon PHIL EDMAN: The other issue that was brought up was alcohol. I understand the residents of Rockingham are frustrated that it is an offence to drink alcohol in a public place on the beach. It would be nice, I guess, for some people who can behave themselves with a wine or beer. But, unfortunately, it is an offence and I think that is the way that it needs to stay. Last night, Mark McGowan spoke about the nightclubs in Rockingham; namely, Vibe and Liquid nightclubs. The owner of Liquid is Peter Mirco. Those nightclubs have been there for quite a time, probably before the high-rise developments occurred.

Hon Kate Doust: When some of us were teenagers.

Hon PHIL EDMAN: Yes, I have been there as well. I am not against nightclubs. I have a problem with keeping them open until 5.00 am. Maybe it needs to be reduced; maybe there needs to be restrictions on the licence. However, I must say that I am not a big supporter for completely getting rid of Liquid Niteclub. However, it is ludicrous for Mark McGowan to suggest on 6PR and Channel Nine that the Rockingham City Council should buy the nightclub from the owner to close it down. I do not think that is the way forward at all.

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

Hon PHIL EDMAN: I would love to take Hon Ken Travers’ interjections, but I do not have a lot of time. As members would know, I recently went on a little excursion with the police. I was pretty pleased that the response time for a category 1 incident was around 10 minutes; and for a category 2, under 40 minutes. That was in the

winter break. Again, if I am allowed by the minister and the police commissioner, I plan to take another ride during those awful hours in the morning. It was a hard shift. It will be interesting to see what happens in the warmer months. I will report to the house once that happens. Simply to go on saying that we need another police station in Secret Harbour and that it needs to be open 24 hours will not solve crime. What will solve crime are diversion programs and more police on the beat. That is a deterrent. I remember when we had one detective in Rockingham; now under our government there are 26. There is a huge increase of police presence in the area, but I know the area has grown, too. Once again, there is a lot more work that needs to be done. We do have problems with prolific and priority offenders and youth at risk, but these diversion programs, such as “Right for Right” and “Well for Life”—I have been saying it for four or five years in this place—need to be replicated and supported by everyone. That is the key: not locking them up. The key is rehabilitation of our youth.

In relation to industry, I was very pleased to hear that Mr McGowan and Hon Lynn MacLaren agree that we should have a port in the Kwinana area. That is one point that is great. From what I hear, it sounds like Mark McGowan is very supportive of the marina in the area, as long as it stacks up against —

Hon Ken Travers: He is now?

Hon PHIL EDMAN: Yes, apparently so, which is good, because as long as it stands up against the environment, then it is fine. I think we all agree on that point. None of us wants to wreck the environment. That was the only issue. Mark McGowan said that it had to stand up against strict environmental conditions. I agree with him. It must, and our government supports that. When the Rockingham Kwinana Development Office was opened and commissioned, it did a risk and traffic assessment report for a second access way to the Rockingham Hospital. It said that it was not needed for another 10 years. Yes, eventually it will happen, but we spent some \$20 000-odd for those two reports to give us the correct advice, not just to go off on a whim so we can say, “Yeah, let’s get a second access way”; instead of wasting taxpayers’ money. I am not an expert—that is why we commissioned the reports—but the second access way is not needed at the moment. In relation to transport and the train station, I will put it on record as a member for South Metropolitan Region: I want a train station at Paganoni Road. We need one.

Hon Ken Travers: Vote Labor and you’ll get one!

Hon PHIL EDMAN: It is desperately needed.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Hon Ken Travers, I know you are only trying to help; you are that sort of guy. But you cannot make another member’s speech for them, so let him make his speech and finish his comments.

Hon PHIL EDMAN: One of things that we do as Liberals is allow continual lobbying of the government for things in our electorate. We will oppose things we do not think are good for our electorate too. We will even cross the floor if we need to. We are allowed to do that because the Liberal Party is extremely democratic, which is something I am very proud of. I really would have loved to have been at that community forum last night. It was for no reason other than that my duties are here to this house as the Whip. If it was held at another time and they did another community forum, I would be there with bells on.

HON MARK MCGOWAN AND HON JIM CHOWN

Statement

HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural) [5.29 pm]: With the indulgence of Mr President and members, I want to make a much shorter member’s statement. I want to make a point of clarification about a debate that was held today during non-government business, in which we moved that the Legislative Council condemn the Barnett government for the closure of the tier 3 rail lines. During that debate, there was an exchange across the house between several members and Hon Jim Chown, and Hon Jim Chown made a reference to Mark McGowan joining the Liberal Party. During the course of that exchange, I called across the chamber, “You lot are welcome to him”. I want to make it very clear that that comment was in reference to Hon Jim Chown and not the member for Rockingham and Leader of the WA Labor Party, Mark McGowan. I have worked with Mark McGowan for 14 years. He is a person for whom I have extraordinarily high regard, and I consider him to be a friend. Mark McGowan is the shadow Minister for Regional Development, and I am proud to serve as his shadow parliamentary secretary. So I want it on the record in *Hansard* that the comment that I made across the chamber was in no way in reference to Mark McGowan. Members on that side of that house are more than welcome to Hon Jim Chown. We will keep Mark McGowan as the next Premier of Western Australia.

HON MARK MCGOWAN AND HON JIM CHOWN

Statement

HON SIMON O’BRIEN (South Metropolitan) [5.31 pm]: In a spirit of bipartisanship, I would like to thank Hon Darren West for his point of clarification. I think I speak for all of us on this side when I say that we are delighted to decline his purported offer that we should have Mark McGowan.

Hon Ken Travers: I thought you were declining Jim Chown!

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: No. We love Jim. We will keep Jim.

Hon Ken Travers: You know the rules about misleading the house, don't you?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: The thought that members opposite might have lost him has clearly upset them! So they can keep Mark McGowan, and good luck to them! And now, Mr President, I intend to do something that will make me popular on all sides of the house, and sit down.

House adjourned at 5.32 pm

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Questions and answers are as supplied to Hansard.

ABORIGINAL CHILDREN IN CARE — KIMBERLEY

342. Hon Robin Chapple to the Minister for Child Protection:

I refer to a question without notice asked on 10 September 2013 regarding Aboriginal children under the care of the Department of Child Protection, and I ask:

- (a) can the Minister please provide reasons why the number of children in care in the Kimberley region is so much higher, as much as double in some instances, than in other regions of the State;
- (b) what monitoring is being undertaken to better understand the current situation throughout the State but especially in the Kimberley;
- (c) which policies of Government are contributing to the current dire situation;
- (d) does the Government consider the current situation to be acceptable;
- (e) if not, what steps are being taken to reduce the numbers of children in care in the Kimberley and elsewhere in the State;
- (f) can the Minister please provide reasons for the steady increase in the number of Aboriginal children in care each year from 2009 to 2013; and
- (g) what steps will the Government take to turn this trend around?

Hon Helen Morton replied:

- (a) The number of children in the Kimberley region in the care of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Department for Child Protection and Family Support (the Department) is not higher than other regions of the state with similar demographics. To illustrate, the proportion of Aboriginal children in care as a percentage of all Aboriginal children is:

4.5 per cent in the East and West Kimberley

4.9 per cent in the Pilbara

4.3 per cent in the Murchison.

Furthermore the average annual growth rate in the number of Aboriginal children in care in Western Australia has declined from an average of 17 per cent per year between 2003 and 2008, to 11 per cent between 2008 and 2013.

In the Kimberley region the rate has declined from an average annual growth rate of 83 per cent to seven per cent over the same period.

- (b) Child protection issues are complex and require multi-pronged approaches. To assist the Department to monitor and coordinate responses to child abuse a range of groups have been established across government and at the local level including:
 - the Child Safety Directors Group which is chaired by the Department comprises executive level officers of human service departments;
 - the Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee and related subcommittees;
 - Human Services Regional Managers Forums;
 - Child at Risk meetings held in Wyndham, Halls Creek, Kununurra, Balgo, Warmun and Kalumburu; and
 - Young People at Risk meetings held in Kununurra, Halls Creek, Broome, Derby, Fitzroy Crossing and the remote communities of Bidyadanga, Looma, Nookanbah, Djarindjin and commencing this month in One Arm Point.
- (c) It is recognised that the policies of previous governments have contributed to the current disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal people.

However this Government has taken very real and practical steps toward the social and economic development of Aboriginal people in Western Australia.

An Aboriginal Affairs Cabinet Subcommittee has recently been formed of which I am a member. This subcommittee is considering direct advice about how resources can be used to better respond to the health, mental health, education and other needs of the Aboriginal community.

- (d) In an ideal world there would not be a need for any child to be in care. However, the Department must act to make children safe and where a child is at risk, protective action has to be taken, including bringing a child into care if necessary. Aboriginal children are entitled to the same level of safety as all others.
- (e) Efforts to reduce the number of children in care have been a focus for this government and considerable investment has been made to further strengthen the services available to support Aboriginal children and their families. Overall funding from the Department for the Kimberley District has increased from \$10.8 million in 2007–08 to \$29.8 million in 2013–14, a total increase of \$19 million. Funding for community sector services in the Kimberley has increased from \$4.03 million in 2007–08 to over \$10.6 million in 2013–14. Specific initiatives include:
- Implementation of the Signs of Safety child protection practice framework which works to keep children at home where it is safe to do so;
 - Responsible Parenting Services, which includes the Parent Support and Best Beginnings programs;
 - Strong Families;
 - Operation Reset in partnership with the Western Australia Police;
 - Introduction of child protection income management and use of liquor restricted premises declarations, and
 - A large range of support services funded and provided through the community sector including counselling and healing programs.
- (f) The rate of Aboriginal children in care is increasing across every jurisdiction of Australia. National figures indicate that an Aboriginal child is 10 times more likely to be in care than a non-Aboriginal child. In part, this increase can be attributed to population growth and an increasing Aboriginal child population. However, the key drivers of children coming into care remain parental alcohol and drug use, domestic violence and mental health issues.
- (g) Aboriginal disadvantage and its impact on children require a whole of community and government response.
- Importantly, when any child comes into care, a focus is placed on planning for reunification from the first day.
- It is also notable that the majority of Aboriginal children in care are placed with a relative, where cultural connections can be maintained.

HON PETER COLLIER — PUBLIC SECTOR COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

361. Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich to the Leader of the House representing the Premier:

I refer to the article in *The West Australian* by Daniel Emerson, dated Thursday 22 August 2013, titled “Minister in Labor sights over inquiry”, and I ask:

- (a) why was the Minister, Peter Collier as Minister for Training at the time in question, able to lobby the Public Sector Commissioner to change the terms of reference of an investigation into the bullying of public servants by him and his office;
- (b) are all Ministers able to lobby the Public Sector Commissioner before an investigation occurs;
- (c) if no to (b), why was Minister Collier allowed to do so; and
- (d) why were the terms of reference changed from an “an investigation into the culture and processes of the ministerial office” to “review of the structure, general operation and lines of communication” of the Department of Training and Workforce Development?

Hon Peter Collier replied:

Public Sector Commission

- (a)–(d) The Premier refers to the Public Sector Commissioner’s report on an examination into the relationship between the Office of the former Minister for Training and Workforce Development and the Department of Training and Workforce Development tabled in Parliament on 30 August 2013.

In the report, the Public Sector Commissioner makes it clear that in developing the terms of reference he considered it appropriate to discuss the matters to be examined with the Director General and the then Minister for Training and Workforce Development. However the decision was always that of the Public Sector Commissioner.

ESPERANCE — LAND CLEARING PRACTICES

362. Hon Robin Chapple to the Minister for Mental Health representing the Minister for Environment:

- (1) As the former Minister for Environment, did the Minister make an election promise to the people of Esperance to review land clearing practices and legislation?
- (2) If yes to (1), what stage of the review is the Minister up to?
- (3) If yes to (1), when will the review be finalised?

Hon Helen Morton replied:

The Minister for Environment has provided the following response.

- (1) Yes.
- (2) The Government is developing amendments to the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* and the Environmental Protection (Clearing of Native Vegetation) Regulations 2004 to streamline administrative processes for clearing permits and improve regulatory effectiveness. The amendments will make an important contribution to the Government's 2013 election commitment to work to reduce unnecessary burdens prohibiting farmers' future growth and success.
- (3) It is anticipated that the amendments to the Environmental Protection Act will be introduced into Parliament in Autumn 2014 and the amendments to the regulations will be made by the end of 2013.

MINISTERIAL OFFICES — STATE ELECTION CANDIDATES

364. Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich to the Leader of the House representing the Premier:

- (1) What is the Government's policy on the employment of officers working in ministerial offices who are pre-selected as candidates prior to an election?
- (2) Is it true that Ms Jaimee Motion was required to resign prior to her pre-selection as the Liberal candidate for the seat of Collie–Preston at the 2013 State election?
- (3) If yes to (2), can the Premier explain why Mr Peter Katsambanis was not required to resign from his position as Minister Peter Collier's Chief of Staff prior to his pre-selection in the 2013 State election?
- (4) Can the Premier advise the last day of employment for Ms Jaimee Motion prior to the 2013 State election?
- (5) Can the Premier advise the last day of employment for Mr Peter Katsambanis prior to the 2013 State election?

Hon Peter Collier replied:**Department of the Premier and Cabinet**

- (1) Government officers, including those employed in ministerial offices, were encouraged to seek their own legal advice about their responsibilities as a State election candidate and their public employment. No specific advice was provided by the Department to public sector officers who chose to nominate as candidates. This is primarily due to the varied nature of employment arrangements across the public sector making it difficult to recommend one single policy approach.
- (2) No. Ms Motion resigned at a time of her choice and was not required or asked to resign by the Department.
- (3) Not applicable
- (4) 28 August 2012
- (5) Mr Katsambanis commenced leave without pay on 11 February 2013. His contract of employment expired on 21 March 2013.

MINISTERIAL RESOURCING REPORTS

365. Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich to the Leader of the House representing the Premier:

- (1) Can the Premier advise why no Ministerial Resourcing Reports were tabled in the Parliament between 25 October 2012 and 9 May 2013, that being an eight month period inclusive of the election?
- (2) Can the Premier explain why there is a Ministerial Resourcing Report for 9 May 2013 and for 18 July 2013, that being two reports in two months?

Hon Peter Collier replied:

Department of the Premier and Cabinet

- (1) The Ministerial Resourcing Report is tabled quarterly in February, May, August and November in each House. A Ministerial Resourcing Report reflecting data for the last public service pay date in October 2012 was tabled in the Legislative Council on 28 November 2012 (Tabled Paper Number 5423). There was no Ministerial Resourcing Report tabled in either House in February 2013, as per the usual tabling schedule due to Parliament being prorogued.
- (2) The tabling of a Ministerial Resourcing Report on 16 May 2013 (tabled paper number 252) and on 15 August 2013 (tabled paper number 526) reflecting ministerial staffing data as at 9 May 2013 and 18 July 2013 respectively is in line with the established tabling pattern.

NICOLAU SOARES CASE — MINISTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH

366. Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich to the Minister for Mental Health:

I refer to the Minister's comments in the media, that the Minister's heart went out to the family of Nicolau Soares, and that the Minister's office was arranging a Department of Health official to contact them, and I ask:

- (a) what contact has the Minister personally had with the family of Nicolau Soares;
- (b) has the Department of Health official contacted them; and
- (c) if yes to (b), when was that contact made and by who?

Hon Helen Morton replied:

- (a) I have had no contact personally with the family of Nicolau Soares.
- (b)–(c) The Department of Health has however had ongoing contact with Ms Katherine Westin and Mr Alex Soares, the siblings of Nicolau Soares, from earlier this year until August 2013. Dr Elizabeth Moore, Executive Director, SMHS Mental Health, last had contact with Ms Katherine Weston, Mr Alex Soares, Mr Grant and Ms Jill Mooney on 19 August 2013.

NICOLAU SOARES CASE — ALMA STREET MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE

367. Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich to the Minister for Mental Health:

I refer to the Nicolau Soares case and the Minister's promise to his family to share the findings of the internal report by Alma Street's Adult Mental Health Service with them, and I ask:

- (a) has the family received a copy of the Health Department's findings and recommendations of its handling of the events surrounding the deaths of Gavin Mooney and Del Weston; and
- (b) if no to (a), why not?

Hon Helen Morton replied:

- (a) Mr Soares' family were provided with a summary of the findings and recommendations of the internal review on 8 August 2013.
- (b) Not applicable.

NICOLAU SOARES CASE — ALMA STREET MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE

369. Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich to the Minister for Mental Health:

- (1) Can the Minister advise what action was taken by the Alma Street Mental Health Service after Nicolau Soares failed to attend a scheduled appointment and attempts to contact him failed in the weeks before he allegedly killed his mother and stepfather?
- (2) Had the Alma Street Mental Health Service received warnings, expressions of fears and concern from Nicolau Soares' siblings in the weeks before the killings?
- (3) What was the response of the Alma Street Mental Health Service to those warnings, fears and concerns from Nicolau Soares' siblings in the weeks before the killing?
- (4) Why weren't the warnings, fears and concerns taken on board by Alma Street Mental Health Service?

Hon Helen Morton replied:

- (1) The Alma Street Mental Health Centre, through the Case Manager, visited Mr Soares' usual place of residence on several occasions and also attempted telephone contact with him during this period of time.
- (2) No.
- (3)–(4) Not applicable.

MENTAL HEALTH PATIENTS — ABSCONDMENT

370. Hon Stephen Dawson to the Minister for Mental Health:

I refer to Department of Health figures obtained through a freedom of information application that show 240 mental health patients were reported as absconders by staff in 2012–13 and I ask, which facilities did these patients abscond from and how many absconded from each facility?

Hon Helen Morton replied:

The definition of absconding is broad; for example, it includes patients who may be approved leave from inpatient care but have not returned to the ward by a specified time.

Hospitals:

Albany Hospital 6
 Armadale Hospital <5
 Bentley Adolescent Hospital 22
 Bentley Hospital <5
 Frankland Centre <5
 Graylands Hospital 153
 Joondalup Hospital <5
 Kalgoorlie Hospital <5
 Katanning Hospital <5
 Nickol Bay Hospital <5
 Peel Rockingham Kwinana Hospital <5
 Princess Margaret Hospital 6
 Royal Perth Hospital 7
 Swan Hospital 13

Emergency Departments:

Albany Hospital <5
 Fremantle Hospital <5
 Geraldton Hospital <5
 Peel Rockingham Kwinana Hospital <5
 Port Hedland Hospital <5
 Royal Perth Hospital <5

Other:

NGO Armadale Community Child & Adolescent <5
 Hostel Accommodation <5

TOTAL 240

HARDSHIP UTILITY GRANT SCHEME — GRANTS

371. Hon Stephen Dawson to the Minister for Child Protection:

For each of the utilities Synergy, Horizon, Water Corporation and Alinta, in relation to the Hardship Utilities Grant Scheme for September 2013:

- (a) what was the number of approved grants;
- (b) what was the total grant amount; and
- (c) what was the average amount paid?

Hon Helen Morton replied:

(a)

Utility	Number of Approved Grants
Synergy	1119
Horizon	81
Water Corporation	61
Alinta	456

(b)

Utility	Total Grant Amount
Synergy	\$411,358
Horizon	\$46,989
Water Corporation	\$17,344
Alinta	\$118,045

(c)

Utility	Average Grant Value
Synergy	\$368
Horizon	\$580
Water Corporation	\$284
Alinta	\$259

HARDSHIP UTILITY GRANT SCHEME — REGIONS

372. Hon Stephen Dawson to the Minister for Child Protection:

For all Hardship Utility Grant Scheme applicants processed by the Department for Child Protection in September 2013, please detail how many applicants were from:

- (a) Great Southern Region;
- (b) South West Region;
- (c) Goldfields Region;
- (d) Murchison–Gascoyne Region;
- (e) Wheatbelt Region;
- (f) East Kimberley Region;
- (g) West Kimberley Region;
- (h) Pilbara Region;
- (i) Peel Region; and
- (j) Mid West?

Hon Helen Morton replied:

Question Number	Regional Development Region	September 2013
(a)	Great Southern	57
(b)	South West	144
(c)	Goldfields	53
(d)	Gascoyne	6
(e)	Wheatbelt	68
(f) and (g)	Kimberley (East and West)	29
(h)	Pilbara	23
(i)	Peel	95
(j)	Midwest	50
Grand Total		525

HARDSHIP UTILITY GRANT SCHEME — APPLICATIONS

373. Hon Stephen Dawson to the Minister for Child Protection:

For all Hardship Utility Grant Scheme applicants processed by the Department for Child Protection in September 2013, please provide the number of applications by:

- (a) postcode;
- (b) regional development region;
- (c) main source of income;
- (d) family status;
- (e) number of children;
- (f) gender;
- (g) age;
- (h) housing tenure; and
- (i) ethnicity?

Hon Helen Morton replied:

- (a)–(i) [See paper 1035.]

CHILDREN IN CARE — DISTRICTS

374. Hon Stephen Dawson to the Minister for Child Protection:

- (1) By district, how many children were under the care of the Department for Child Protection and Family Support during the month of August 2013?
- (2) By district, how many of these were placed in non-government group facilities?
- (3) By district, how many of these were placed in non-government group facilities?
- (4) By district, how many of these were in placements with non-government organisation foster carers?

Hon Helen Morton replied:

- (1) As at 31 August 2013, there were 4,012 children in care, in the following districts:
 - Armadale — 408
 - Cannington — 334
 - Fremantle — 277
 - Joondalup — 279
 - Midland — 312
 - Mirraboooka — 333
 - Perth — 258
 - Rockingham — 259
 - East Kimberley — 109
 - Goldfields — 191
 - Great Southern — 171
 - Murchison — 180
 - Peel — 218
 - Pilbara — 132
 - South West — 228
 - West Kimberley — 148
 - Wheatbelt — 167
 - Fostering and Adoption Services — 8.
- (2) As at 31 August 2013, there were 278 children placed in non-government group facilities in the following districts:
 - Armadale — 25
 - Cannington — 10
 - Fremantle — 18
 - Joondalup — 35
 - Midland — 18
 - Mirraboooka — 17
 - Perth — 21
 - Rockingham — 17
 - East Kimberley — 13
 - Goldfields — 16
 - Great Southern — 10
 - Murchison — 16
 - Peel — 7
 - Pilbara — 13
 - South West — 14
 - West Kimberley — 18
 - Wheatbelt — 10.
- (3) See (2) above.
- (4) As at 31 August 2013, there were 379 children placed with non-government organisation foster carers, in the following districts:
 - Armadale — 48
 - Cannington — 43
 - Fremantle — 33
 - Joondalup — 39
 - Midland — 47
 - Mirraboooka — 34
 - Perth — 44

Rockingham — 36
 East Kimberley — 6
 Goldfields — 11
 Great Southern — 11
 Murchison — 3
 Peel — 3
 Pilbara — 3
 South West — 6
 West Kimberley — 3
 Wheatbelt — 9.

CHILD PROTECTION — FTE EMPLOYEES

375. Hon Stephen Dawson to the Minister for Child Protection:

- (1) As at 31 August 2013, what was the total Department for Child Protection and Family Support (DCPaFS) funded full time equivalent (FTE) employee allocation by directorate and district?
- (2) As at 31 August 2013:
 - (a) what were the vacancies in the FTE terms by directorate and district;
 - (b) by district, how many of those vacancies were subject to advertising; and
 - (c) of those vacancies not subject to advertising, please provide the reason why?
- (3) As at 31 August 2013, what was the total service delivery FTE employee allocation by directorate and district?
- (4) As at 31 August 2013, what were the total vacant service delivery positions by directorate and district?
- (5) As at 31 August 2013, what was the total FTE case worker allocation by directorate and district?
- (6) As at 31 August 2013, what were the total FTE vacant case worker positions?
- (7) As at 31 August 2013, what was the FTE number of employees by directorate and district on permanent contract and on fixed term contract?
- (8) As at 31 August 2013, how many DCPaFS field officers have been co-located with Western Australian Police staff from the family protection unit, in regional and rural offices as part of the strategy to combat family and domestic abuse?
- (9) What are the co-location sites where the DCPaFS officers referred to in (8) are situated?

Hon Helen Morton replied:

- (1)–(9) [See paper 1036.]

CHILD PROTECTION — SAFETY AND WELLBEING ASSESSMENTS

376. Hon Stephen Dawson to the Minister for Child Protection:

- (1) As at 31 August 2013, what was the number of new Safety and Wellbeing Assessments for a child recorded during that month, by district?
- (2) As at 31 August 2013, what was the number of new Safety and Wellbeing Assessments with a harm assessment recorded during the month, by district?
- (3) As at 31 August 2013, what was the number of children in care for more than 20 days with no planning recorded, by district?
- (4) As at 31 August 2013, what was the number of Safety and Wellbeing Assessment with a harm assessment open for more than 90 days, by district?
- (5) As at 31 August 2013, what were the number of open Safety and Wellbeing Assessments with a harm assessment, by district?
- (6) As at 31 August 2013, what was the number of “monitored” or “active holding” cases not allocated to workers caseload, by district?

Hon Helen Morton replied:

- (1) There were 990 new safety and wellbeing assessments for a child recorded during the month of August 2013, and their distribution by district was:
 Armadale — 78
 Cannington — 82

Crisis Care — 79
 East Kimberley — 34
 Fremantle — 42
 Goldfields — 60
 Great Southern — 30
 Joondalup — 54
 Midland — 30
 Mirrabooka — 65
 Murchison — 49
 Peel — 50
 Perth — 56
 Pilbara — 54
 Rockingham — 96
 South West — 55
 West Kimberley — 28
 Wheatbelt — 45
 Other work units — 3.

- (2) Refer to Question (1). The Department no longer distinguishes between safety and wellbeing assessments with and without harm concerns at the assessment stage. All safety and wellbeing concerns are assessed.

- (3) There were two children in care for more than 30 days with no planning recorded as at 31 August 2013. They were from the following districts:

Great Southern — 1

West Kimberley — 1.

- (4) As at 31 August 2013, there were 444 safety and wellbeing assessments open for more than 90 days, in the following districts:

Armadale — 85
 Cannington — 42
 Crisis Care — 3
 East Kimberley — 36
 Fremantle — 20
 Goldfields — 10
 Great Southern — 31
 Joondalup — 2
 Midland — 69
 Mirrabooka — 50
 Murchison — 7
 Peel — 5
 Perth — 8
 Pilbara — 14
 Rockingham — 20
 South West — 10
 West Kimberley — 11
 Wheatbelt — 21.

- (5) The Department no longer distinguishes between safety and wellbeing assessments with and without harm concerns at the assessment stage. As at 31 August 2013, there were 2,058 open safety and wellbeing assessments, in the following districts:

Armadale — 254
 Cannington — 197
 Crisis Care — 4
 East Kimberley — 104
 Fremantle — 104
 Goldfields — 88
 Great Southern — 63
 Joondalup — 85
 Midland — 172
 Mirrabooka — 221
 Murchison — 68

Peel — 78
 Perth — 117
 Pilbara — 87
 Rockingham — 199
 South West — 66
 West Kimberley — 70
 Wheatbelt — 81.

- (6) As at 31 August 2013, there were 539 monitored cases across the following districts:

Armadale — 64
 Cannington — 59
 East Kimberley — 17
 Fremantle — 49
 Goldfields — 38
 Great Southern — 57
 Joondalup — 32
 Midland — 21
 Mirrabooka — 9
 Murchison — 7
 Peel — 59
 Perth — 7
 Pilbara — 7
 Rockingham — 47
 South West — 26
 West Kimberley — 17
 Wheatbelt — 23.

CHILDREN IN CARE — FOSTER CARERS

377. **Hon Stephen Dawson to the Minister for Child Protection:**

- (1) As at 31 August 2013, what was total number of applications to be a foster carer approved by category of relative and non-relative carer, by district?
- (2) As at 31 August 2013, what was the total number of registered foster carers, by category of relative carer and non-relative carer, by district?
- (3) As at 31 August 2013, what was the total number of interim foster carers, by category of relative and non-relative carer, by district?
- (4) As at 31 August 2013, what was the total number of registered foster carers with children placed, by category of relative and non-relative carers, by district?
- (5) As at 31 August 2013, what was the total number of interim foster carers with children placed, by category of relative and non-relative carers, by district?

Hon Helen Morton replied:

- (1) In August 2013, there were 45 relative and 7 non-relative foster carer applications approved in the following districts:
 Armadale — 6 relative, 1 non-relative
 Cannington — 1 relative, 0 non-relative
 East Kimberley — 1 relative, 0 non-relative
 Fremantle — 2 relative, 2 non-relative
 Goldfields — 6 relative, 0 non-relative
 Great Southern — 2 relative, 1 non-relative
 Joondalup — 2 relative, 0 non-relative
 Midland — 0 relative, 1 non-relative
 Mirrabooka — 2 relative, 0 non-relative
 Murchison — 2 relative, 0 non-relative
 Peel — 4 relative, 0 non-relative
 Perth — 3 relative, 1 non-relative
 Pilbara — 2 relative, 0 non-relative
 Rockingham — 2 relative, 0 non-relative
 South West — 5 relative, 1 non-relative
 West Kimberley — 3 relative, 0 non-relative

Wheatbelt — 2 relative, 0 non-relative

Fostering and Adoption Services — 0 relative, 0 non-relative.

- (2) These data are not retrospectively available. As at 3 September 2013, there were 1,404 relative and 813 non-relative approved foster carer households in the following districts:

Armadale — 126 relative, 75 non-relative

Cannington — 137 relative, 55 non-relative

East Kimberley — 42 relative, 15 non-relative

Fremantle — 104 relative, 45 non-relative

Goldfields — 80 relative, 25 non-relative

Great Southern — 60 relative, 40 non-relative

Joondalup — 77 relative, 70 non-relative

Midland — 87 relative, 53 non-relative

Mirraboooka — 139 relative, 54 non-relative

Murchison — 67 relative, 35 non-relative

Peel — 93 relative, 46 non-relative

Perth — 83 relative, 37 non-relative

Pilbara — 63 relative, 12 non-relative

Rockingham — 69 relative, 52 non-relative

South West — 61 relative, 69 non-relative

West Kimberley — 61 relative, 26 non-relative

Wheatbelt — 52 relative, 49 non-relative

Fostering and Adoption Services — 3 relative, 55 non-relative.

- (3) Due to a policy change in March 2013, carers are no longer approved on an interim basis, however other placement options are available in urgent circumstances under Section 79 (2)(b) of the *Children and Community Services Act 2004*.

- (4) These data are not retrospectively available. As at 3 September 2013, there were 981 relative and 524 non-relative foster carer households with children placed in the following districts:

Armadale — 86 relative, 57 non-relative

Cannington — 80 relative, 41 non-relative

East Kimberley — 31 relative, 5 non-relative

Fremantle — 79 relative, 31 non-relative

Goldfields — 56 relative, 12 non-relative

Great Southern — 31 relative, 24 non-relative

Joondalup — 53 relative, 43 non-relative

Midland — 72 relative, 37 non-relative

Mirraboooka — 90 relative, 42 non-relative

Murchison — 46 relative, 20 non-relative

Peel — 65 relative, 29 non-relative

Perth — 62 relative, 29 non-relative

Pilbara — 48 relative, 7 non-relative

Rockingham — 55 relative, 41 non-relative

South West — 47 relative, 51 non-relative

West Kimberley — 50 relative, 11 non-relative

Wheatbelt — 29 relative, 28 non-relative

Fostering and Adoption Services — 1 relative, 16 non-relative.

- (5) Due to a policy change in March 2013, carers are no longer approved on an interim basis, however other placement options are available in urgent circumstances under Section 79 (2)(b) of the *Children and Community Services Act 2004*.

CHILD PROTECTION — SUSPECTED ABUSE

379. Hon Stephen Dawson to the Minister for Child Protection:

- (1) For the period 1 June 2013 to 31 August 2013, what was the number of initial inquiries in relation to suspected child sexual abuse received, by district and by category of mandated referrer?
- (2) For the period 1 June 2013 to 31 August 2013, what was the number of Safety and Wellbeing Assessment with harm assessment, by district and by category of harm:
- (a) neglect;
 - (b) sexual;

- (c) physical abuse; and
 - (d) emotional abuse?
- (3) Has Western Australia Police notified the Department for Child Protection of any charges that had been laid in respect of any of the Safety and Wellbeing Assessments recorded in the period 1 June 2013 to 31 August 2013?
- (4) If yes to (3), how many individuals were charged and what was the nature of these charges?

Hon Helen Morton replied:

- (1) For the period, 1 June 2013 to 31 August 2013, there were 910 initial inquiries for a child where the primary concern was sexual abuse, in the following districts:

Armadale — 35
 Cannington — 42
 Crisis Care — 219
 East Kimberley — 19
 Fremantle — 29
 Goldfields — 31
 Great Southern — 39
 Joondalup — 43
 Midland — 55
 Mirrabooka — 36
 Murchison — 43
 Peel — 24
 Perth — 57
 Pilbara — 37
 Rockingham — 78
 South West — 55
 West Kimberley — 27
 Wheatbelt — 41.

By category of mandated reporter:

Doctor — 97
 Midwife — 5
 Nurse — 39
 Police officer — 311
 Teacher or principal — 213
 Non-mandated referrers — 245.

- (2) For the period, 1 June 2013 to 31 August 2013, there were 2,693 safety and wellbeing assessments, in the following districts:

Armadale — 181
 Cannington — 245
 Crisis Care — 196
 East Kimberley — 69
 Fremantle — 143
 Goldfields — 100
 Great Southern — 95
 Joondalup — 140
 Midland — 178
 Mirrabooka — 187
 Murchison — 172
 Peel — 124
 Perth — 163
 Pilbara — 99
 Rockingham — 293
 South West — 147
 West Kimberley — 70
 Wheatbelt — 91.

By category of harm:

- (a) Neglect — 937
- (b) Sexual — 827

- (c) Physical — 861
- (d) Emotional/ psychological — 1,073.
- (3) These details are included in individual case notes, but the Department for Child Protection and Family Support does not systematically record this information.
- (4) As outlined in (3), these data are not routinely collected.

CHILD PROTECTION — RESPONSIBLE PARENTING AGREEMENTS

380. Hon Stephen Dawson to the Minister for Child Protection:

- (1) For the period 1 June 2013 to 31 August 2013, how many Responsible Parenting Agreements have the Department for Child Protection implemented?
- (2) How many of those Responsible Parenting Agreements listed in (1) originated from a referral from another State Government department, and how many were referred by each department?
- (3) How many parents approached to enter into a Responsible Parenting Agreement during this period, refused the agreement?
- (4) How many Responsible Parenting Agreements included an agreement for the parents to:
 - (a) take part in counselling or parenting skills training;
 - (b) take reasonable steps to ensure their child attends school;
 - (c) take reasonable steps to ensure their child avoids contact with particular people or places; and
 - (d) undertake other measures?
- (5) How many juveniles, whose parents agreed to a Responsible Parenting Agreement have:
 - (a) improved their attendance at school; and
 - (b) re-offended since the Agreement was made?

Hon Helen Morton replied:

- (1) For the period 1 June 2013 to 31 August 2013, 184 Responsible Parenting Agreements were entered into.
- (2) Of these 184 agreements, 95 originated from another State Government Department:
 - a. Department for Child Protection and Family Support — 73
 - b. Department of Education — 38
 - c. Department of Corrective Services — 34
 - d. Western Australia Police — 17
 - e. Department of Health — 4
 - f. Disability Service Commission — 2
 - g. Community Sector Agencies — 10
 - h. Parent or Guardian — 6.
- (3) These details are included in individual case notes recorded in the Department for Child Protection and Family Support's client information system, but the Department does not record this information in a way that can be reported.
- (4) (a)–(d) Refer to response to question 3.
- (5) (a)–(b) Given the program's six month duration, it is too early to comment on the outcomes of these agreements. In addition, these details are included in individual case notes, but the Department does not record this information in a way that can be reported.

CHILD PROTECTION — COMPULSORY INCOME MANAGEMENT

381. Hon Stephen Dawson to the Minister for Child Protection:

- (1) During the months of June 2013, July 2013 and August 2013, how many individuals did the Department for Child Protection refer to Centrelink for compulsory income management, by district?
- (2) How many individuals with children have presented seeking financial assistance on two or more occasions to the department for the period 1 March 2013 to 31 August 2013, by district?
- (3) How many of these individuals have been assessed for the purpose of referral to the income management program, by district?

Hon Helen Morton replied:

- (1) The Department of Human Services (Centrelink) data shows that the Department for Child Protection and Family Support referred the following number of clients to Centrelink in each of the following months, by district:

June 2013 — 67

Armadale — 4

Cannington — 2

East Kimberley — 38

Fremantle — 3

Midland — 2

Mirrabooka — 3

Peel — 10

Perth — 4

West Kimberley — 1.

July 2013 — 56

Armadale — 9

Cannington — 1

East Kimberley — 19

Fremantle — 1

Goldfields — 2

Joondalup — 6

Midland — 8

Peel — 1

Perth — 1

Rockingham — 6

West Kimberley — 2.

August 2013 — 36

Armadale — 7

Cannington — 5

East Kimberley — 11

Fremantle — 3

Goldfields — 1

Joondalup — 1

Midland — 5

Peel — 1

Perth — 2.

- (2) Between 1 June 2013 and 31 August 2013, 43 distinct individuals with children have presented, seeking financial assistance on two or more occasions, to the same district of the Department for Child Protection and Family Support. The breakdown by district is as follows:

Armadale — 4

Crisis Care — 4

East Kimberley — 1

Fremantle — 2

Great Southern — 5

Goldfields — 1

Joondalup — 3

Midland — 1

Mirrabooka — 3

Murchison — 1

Peel — 2

Perth — 1

Pilbara — 1

Rockingham — 2

Southwest — 3

West Kimberley — 2

Wheatbelt — 7.

- (3) This information is included in individual case notes, but the Department for Child Protection and Family Support does not systematically record this information. However, clients presenting for financial assistance may not be neglecting their children and therefore would not be referred for

compulsory income management. In other cases, referrals are not accepted by Centrelink for income management because the client is not on an eligible support payment.

HARDSHIP UTILITY GRANT SCHEME — ASSISTANCE

382. Hon Stephen Dawson to the Minister for Child Protection:

For the months of August 2013, August 2012 and August 2011, how many applicants were provided with financial assistance to pay utility bills for the following suburbs:

- (a) Leeming;
- (b) Canning Vale;
- (c) Morley;
- (d) Wanneroo;
- (e) Willagee;
- (f) Samson;
- (g) Spencer Park;
- (h) Balcatta;
- (i) Dalyellup;
- (j) High Wycombe;
- (k) Kingsley;
- (l) Clarkson;
- (m) Noranda;
- (n) Yokine;
- (o) Currambine;
- (p) Parkwood;
- (q) Innaloo;
- (r) Huntingdale;
- (s) Ellenbrook;
- (t) Darch; and
- (u) Peppermint Grove?

Hon Helen Morton replied:

For the months of August 2011, August 2012 and August 2013 the table below reflects the number of Hardship Utility Grants provided by suburb:

	Suburb	August 2011	August 2012	August 2013
(a)	Leeming	1	3	3
(b)	Canning Vale	2	9	11
(c)	Morley	11	10	17
(d)	Wanneroo	10	19	14
(e)	Willagee	3	9	18
(f)	Samson	0	3	0
(g)	Spencer Park	0	9	4
(h)	Balcatta	0	5	15
(i)	Dalyellup	4	10	4
(j)	High Wycombe	12	8	5
(k)	Kingsley	1	5	7
(l)	Clarkson	24	18	19
(m)	Noranda	0	0	3
(n)	Yokine	6	11	9
(o)	Currambine	2	4	6
(p)	Parkwood	2	2	1
(q)	Innaloo	1	8	3
(r)	Huntingdale	6	7	13
(s)	Ellenbrook	14	17	35
(t)	Darch	3	1	3
(u)	Peppermint Grove	0	0	0

