

PREMIER'S STATEMENT

Consideration of Question, as Amended

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

The SPEAKER: Members, I just want to make this point to you so that you know what you are about to address. The question is that the Premier's Statement be noted and that the government recognise the value of school dental therapy assistants.

MR J.J.M. BOWLER (Kalgoorlie) [2.54 pm]: So, Mr Speaker, I cannot talk on the general Premier's Statement.

The SPEAKER: Yes, you can.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: I am particularly pleased that the Premier is in the chamber right now, because the first thing I want to say is that shortly after the member for Cottesloe became the Premier, he got the member for Scarborough and Hon Ken Baston to conduct a red-tape survey of the Western Australian public service. That resulted in the cutting down of some unnecessary red tape, some unnecessary forms and some unnecessary applications and approvals processes, and I believe that that process by those two members of Parliament was a worthwhile one. Sadly, I have noticed, particularly in the mining industry but right through the public sector, that the creep keeps coming back because public servants, wherever they are, will always want to justify their position being more important, so another approvals process is introduced. I say to the Premier that I think the time has come for an almost permanent review of red tape in our public service, particularly in the mining approvals area. I believe we have a very pro-mining and experienced Minister for Mines and Petroleum, yet in the last three or four months alone there have been some disconcerting increases in environmental and other approvals that have added greatly to the costs of the mining industry—costs that I believe do not improve the environment one little bit and do not improve the mining processes one iota, yet the cost to the mining industry collectively is many tens of millions of dollars.

I will deal with the first one. In the past a program of works approval would last while that program of works continued. If the program of works, whether it was for drilling or for a pushing up by some prospectors or a small company, lasted for two or three years, that program of works application, once approved, would last for that period. Suddenly, the Department of Mines and Petroleum wants the approval application renewed every year. If the mining goes for 14 months or the drilling goes for 15 months, at the end of 12 months the prospector or the company has to reapply and go through the whole process again. They may have all the work crews in the bush doing the work, but if for some reason the works approval application is not approved, the people in those crews have to be stood down and go back to their regional towns or to another job and wait for the approvals to come. I do not see why the program of works need to be renewed every 12 months during the life of a project.

Worse still, just recently we received notification that prospectors and small leaseholders can lodge these applications only electronically. Bill Allen, a neighbour who lives next to me on the left-hand side, would not know what a computer looks like, so how is he going to lodge an electronic application? I think the department is right in trying to encourage prospectors, small leaseholders and mining companies to lodge their applications electronically, but to say that that is the only way it can be done, particularly in this industry, is, I think, wrong. It is going to cause a lot of angst, and I think a lot of prospectors will have to employ someone to do it for them. Once again, it adds unnecessary cost and red tape. As I said to the Premier, I think the member for Scarborough and Hon Ken Baston did a very good job, and obviously, as our new Premier, he came into office with that in mind—that is, cutting out unnecessary red tape. I say to the Premier that that is one area in which, suddenly, red tape has increased. I think that we might need to have a commissioner who constantly goes into departments, reviews their processes, approvals plans and whatever forms they foist onto the public or, in particular, small business, and asks, "Is this form really necessary?"

What would happen if this form was not there? Very often we find that life will go on.

Another area of worry in the Department of Mines and Petroleum is a thing we call the mine closure plans. Suddenly, they now have to be done every three years. Imagine if a mine closure had been planned for the Golden Mile in 1893, and in 2012 we are still going, and every three years there was a mine closure plan! A mine closure plan is very expensive. Every three years, every company with a mine in Western Australia has to review its plans. Norton Gold Fields Ltd, a relatively small company north of Kalgoorlie, estimates that in the next three years its mine closure plan will cost \$1 million alone. That is a very small company. It will produce a big wad of paper, or a big lot of electronic data if the department has its way. The department people who live in Kalgoorlie tell me that they now cannot get onto the ground to check any of these documents and the veracity of what is being done because they have so much paper and so many forms to go through that they spend all their

time in the office. I am sure we do not want that to happen. This is happening at a time when we have a promising, very astute and experienced Minister for Mines and Petroleum in Hon Norman Moore.

Mr C.J. Barnett: It would be reasonable to require companies, every three years, to confirm that their closure plan is still current and up to date.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: Something like that could be okay, but not to go through the whole thing again. The ones who love this are the environmental consultants who make tens of millions of dollars out of it. Right now, when the mining industry is going so well and we are in a boom—or, if people do not want to call it that, a continued period of growth—we do not worry about these extra costs. The Premier and I have both seen downturns when every little cent counts. If every little unnecessary process, form or application can be cut out by government, and big and small businesses can make savings, government should be doing so. I do not know whether in a way calling for a permanent red tape commissioner will add to the red tape and bureaucracy; which I do not want to create. Maybe somewhere in the system, without appointing someone new, we can have a constant review, as the member for Scarborough and Hon Ken Baston did so well. I want to cut down on the processes to encourage and help the mining industry reduce its costs, particularly those that are unnecessary.

Another area of cost is native title. Native title is a disgrace, particularly when it is linked to the heritage act. I have a recent example. In order to encourage the swift development of a short-stay facility for Indigenous people in the goldfields—this is for the Spinifex people from Coonana and Tjuntjuntjara to stay when they come into Kalgoorlie–Boulder, not for anyone else—we could not get heritage clearance unless the Department of Housing paid over \$20 000 to the local native title group to do the clearance on this half acre or acre lot. This lot is right next to Kambalda Road that was a golf club car park. There was clearly no heritage possibility there, yet the Department of Housing created a rod for its own back by paying over \$20 000 for people to spend three hours walking across it and saying there is no heritage! That is an absolute disgrace. That set the bar high for a constituent in Addis Street who wanted to buy the block next to her house. The same native title group claimed it would cost \$18 414 to do a heritage clearance on a block when clearly there is no heritage left. At my encouragement, the department stood firm and refused to pay it. Suddenly, the demand started dropping dramatically. Thankfully, the department has refused to pay anything. It has said to the Widji claimants that it is going to go to the independent person. I believe the department will end up having to pay nothing. There are another 12 residential blocks in Kalgoorlie–Boulder that would suffer the same fate. People may say, “These are the native title claimants, it was their land, why shouldn’t they get something?”, which makes us all feel warm and fuzzy. Let me tell members, the claimants do not get it; it goes to one accountant in particular in Perth, a lawyer, and an anthropologist who lives in Albany and drives to Kalgoorlie to get the money.

The other thing on the mining industry is that after this \$20 000 bar was set by the Department of Housing, the claims for heritage clearance on the prospectors and mining industry suddenly went through the roof. Thankfully, I think the government as a whole is holding a firm line. People may say that we do not want to destroy heritage, and I say exactly that—that we should not be destroying heritage and we should be working with the people—but to be paid more than \$20 000 for a three-hour walk across a half-acre block is absolutely ridiculous; we have to get things into perspective.

The other thing is that a month does not go by when I do not get a complaint about native title—not from mining companies or shires, but from Indigenous people. We have an unfair system that is without structure, and the money does not flow down to everyone equally and fairly. In a typical native title claim of, say, 50 people, the head will get a large part, the co-signatories on the claim—there might be five or six—will get the next 20 per cent, and the other 30 or 40 people will get absolutely nothing; if they complain, they might get \$100 thrown at them. It is wrong. We should have a structure. I know it is not up to this house, it is up to the federal government, but it is time the federal government revisited native title and implemented a fairer system so that all native title claimants benefit equally. Fair enough, the people who head the claim and do all the work should get paid more money—I see the member for Belmont in this place; he did some excellent work in this area when he was the Treasurer and had responsibility for it. I think some of those groups he settled claims with—just before him, by the way, were the Spinifex people when the Court government was in—particularly those in the Pilbara and the Kimberley, generally have structures for money to flow down. Sadly, that is not the case in my area; generally, the one or two heads get the bulk of it, the next down get a bit, and the rest get nothing—no, it is wrong.

Mr E.S. Ripper: I invited the National Native Title Tribunal to assist us with a global comprehensive settlement of all the goldfields claims, but such is the level of division that we were not able to achieve a result.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: And while those at the top are getting the bulk, why would they want to change the system? They are generally the most vociferous and know the structures of government and those within government, so it is going to be very difficult for any government to change a system that benefits those heading the system the most, but clearly it should happen. It is the sort of thing that will only happen just after an election

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 23 February 2012]

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Mr John Bowler; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Peter Abetz

because I do not think it would be popular. As I say, those receiving the most benefit are the most vociferous and they know how to use the system, and they will make life difficult for any party that tries to make the payment system more equitable and structured. If that were to happen, future generations would also benefit, because in many cases native title has been given away for a very short-term gain for a very few. I know this house cannot do anything about that so I should not spend too much time on it, but it can about heritage and I am glad that some common sense will—hopefully—be used in that area.

I turn to some local issues, the first of which is the high school. I have spoken to the Minister for Education and the Minister for Regional Development because I think Kalgoorlie deserves and demands a new high school, and it should be the highest priority of the state. The Minister for Education has said that she realises that, and time will tell whether she will come good in the budget. I will be very disappointed if a new high school for Kalgoorlie is not the number one priority for education in the state. The outcomes in the goldfields have not been good. I do not want to talk down the good work being done by the principals and the teachers, but the outcomes have not been good. I have been told that Kalgoorlie will be high on the list, and hopefully that will come in this year's budget. In last year's budget, the School of Mines got \$20 million for student accommodation. They have had some difficulties in the processes and the way to go forward; thankfully, I think they have been resolved in the past couple of weeks.

I want to talk about a couple of matters in the transport portfolio. Great Eastern Highway is the gateway to Western Australia but is, I believe, the worst highway in the state and possibly Australia—it is a disgrace. Sure enough, the roads down to the south west and other areas of the state, including Brand Highway and others up the coast, needed work done on them, but Great Eastern Highway now needs work done on it, particularly from Merredin to my electorate; that road is in a disgraceful condition. Another road that requires work is the road from the Magellan mine to Doolgunna that completes the transport link between the goldfields and the Pilbara. The member sitting next to me would like to see the Wiluna–Meekatharra road completed. Some money should be spent on that route, but the more important route for Western Australia and Australia is the route from the Magellan lead mine, which I hope will reopen soon, to Doolgunna. The former Minister for Planning and Infrastructure in the previous government, Hon Alannah MacTiernan, was the first minister to start working on that strip. She undertook work on some of the worst sections between Wiluna and the Magellan mine. Hopefully the rest of that section of road can be completed in the next budget.

The fly in, fly out arrangements remain the bane of me, my electorate and, I assume I would say rightly, any country member, particularly those in the north west, the Pilbara, the Kimberley and even some parts of the wheatbelt. The effect of the fly in, fly out arrangement is as bad now as it has ever been. I continue to see the social problems it causes and the extra cost burden to government as a result of the policies of the mining industry. We all have to up the tab when there is social disruption as the result of divorce or whatever. Someone somewhere along the system must pay. I see it too often. I am also a justice of the peace and hardly a day goes by when I do not sign divorce papers.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: I am also particularly concerned about the proposed centralised remote control depot at Perth Airport to control driverless trains from the mines. I used to be a terrible flier. I am a bit more at peace with flying now because I tell myself that the guy at the front of the plane has bit of skin in this too and will do everything he can to make sure that the plane lands safely. However, if the pilot of a plane from Perth to Kalgoorlie is sitting in an armchair at Perth Airport while operating it remotely, as is being proposed for the mining trains, and I have no doubt trucks and other machines, I really worry about what will happen. Of course, after people are sitting behind terminals, the next step is that the Rio Tintos of the world will move the call centres—that is all they are—from Australia to India or the Philippines. What is there to stop them from doing that? In the past, the call centres in Australia were taken out of the regional towns and moved to one big centralised call centre in the capital cities and suburbs such as Wanneroo and all around Australia. Mick Murray had one in Collie. Over the years the call centres have all gone overseas. If members think that the mining companies will leave the remote control centres in Perth or wherever else in Australia, they are even sillier than I think they are. The mining companies will move them overseas to chase the cheaper labour. I worry about that from a safety aspect. I believe that safety will be compromised if a truck on a mine site is being driven remotely and the driver does not have to worry about his own skin by ensuring that the truck is driven safely and does not go over the edge or bump into another machine or a maintenance worker. Worse than that, in time those jobs will go overseas. I urge both the state and federal governments to keep an eye on that.

Another area of concern in Western Australia is our tourism industry. I actually do not believe we have a tourism industry. Wherever one goes in the world, or even to the eastern states, it is easy to see that Western Australian tourism does poorly on a national and international scale. Generally, whether it is money or people—other than our share of the GST—Western Australia's contribution to the nation is 10 or 11 per cent, but we do not get anywhere near 10 per cent of the visitors to Australia. I think it is about five per cent—or is three per cent? It is

three per cent; I was being generous saying five per cent. Leaving Australia to go overseas, we realise that Australia does particularly poorly in tourism. Australia does poorly internationally and on a national basis Western Australia does very poorly. We have to ask why.

By the way, I have just noticed that my colleague has a tourism promotion wish list—that is, a list identifying what the tourism industry wants. I would not give it a dollar. Every year it wants \$16 million, \$5 million, \$4.5 million and \$1 million. People will ask why we should not give some money if we have such a bad tourism industry. I ask why we would want to attract anyone here. The reason people do not come here in the first place is that there is nowhere for them to go. Thankfully, the new planning laws, introduced by the Minister for Planning, who is not here today, give the state government the authority to go into particular areas and override local and parochial interests, and the authority to stand up to the environmental lobby that stops any development any time we want to do it along our beautiful coast. Hopefully, this will overcome a century of indecision and a lack of development.

People in my electorate, from Laverton to Kambalda and from Kalgoorlie to even Esperance, where the member for Eyre, Hon Graham Jacobs, is based will attest that people do not go to Esperance. It is becoming increasingly difficult to go to Esperance. So where do they go? They can afford to go only to Bali or to the Gold Coast. They certainly cannot afford a holiday in Western Australia because we have so little holiday accommodation along our coast where people want to holiday that they have to go somewhere else. Once again, I am pleased that the Premier is in the chamber because I want to say to him that we really have to tackle this. There will always be local interests. A local person will always find a reason to stop a development, whether it is because they will lose a little of their line of sight of the ocean or there is a nice sandhill between them and the ocean that they have looked at for 100 years and they like looking at the back of it. I am sick of people saying that Western Australia has the most wonderful beaches; that we have the best coastline in the world. Who cares? No-one ever sees it! No-one can afford a holiday on the coast. There are half-a-dozen beds in Monkey Mia and a couple at Coral Bay, and after that the mining industry basically takes up everything else almost on a permanent basis. People cannot holiday in Western Australia. It is no good giving —

Mr V.A. Catania: Go to Exmouth; Exmouth is good.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: Exmouth. How many beds does it have?

Mr V.A. Catania: Plenty.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: What—20?

Mr V.A. Catania: Plenty.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: I thought the member said 20. It is probably no more than 20!

However, I would not give tourism a dollar because it is no good attracting tourists when we have nowhere for them to stay. I know that even in Perth we now have a lack of hotels. Hopefully, demand will see some new hotels built in the area. We must take on parochial local interests and we must stand up to the environmental activists who will oppose anything, anywhere, anytime. It does not matter what we do, some of these professional protestors will always object to any development. I will say on behalf of my constituents who have to holiday on the Gold Coast or in Bali, that I would like them to be spending the money here in Western Australia. It will take a long time to turn this around. The sorts of resorts and hotels along our beautiful coast that I am talking about and that we should have are not built overnight; it will take 20 or 30 years. However, I would like to see the Barnett government start that process so that one day people can say that in 2013 or 2014 we started to turn around a century of inactivity out of which came only one thing—Observation City.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I agree with you. I have always felt, and I think you would agree, that we should be building more affordable accommodation in national parks and on the beaches.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: Yes.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Accommodation that cannot be sold, that cannot be redeveloped and that is affordable for Western Australians.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: Particularly in the case of caravan parks. As more and more Australians buy caravans, we have fewer and fewer spaces for caravan bays. I think the Premier is right. If we develop that type of accommodation—cheaper chalet and caravan park bays—the gazettal of it should be such that only the minister of the day can change the zoning. That will stop developers coming in to redevelop the sites, and will prevent us from losing those sites again. It will take a long time. It is not going to happen overnight but we have to start.

I want to refer to a couple of other things. I had a word during question time to the Minister for Corrective Services about the construction of a prison in my electorate. It was put back by the previous government, then promised by this government and put back last year. The minister assures me that work will start in the following financial year, and I hope that will happen. A new prison in the eastern goldfields will mean that many inmates

from the goldfields—who should be in Boulder but are scattered around the state a long way from their family and loved ones—will be coming home. It is a humane thing to do. It will also mean another 90 or 100 jobs for my electorate, which I welcome very much.

Another thing I hope the minister will do is, once again, stand up to his department, which keeps its foot on the hose for sending remand prisoners to work camps. Mr Ward would be alive today—we all remember the tragic case of Mr Ward—if he had been sent to a work camp. He was not allowed to be remanded to Mount Morgans work camp 10 kilometres from Laverton. He had to be put into the back of a van and transported all the way to Kalgoorlie. He would have been there for only two or three days and would have been sent back to Laverton, instead of just being sent to Mount Morgans. I understand—unless this has changed recently—that the department still finds ways to prevent that from happening. That should happen for low-risk prison inmates. If the department says that its processes do not allow it to happen, I say that the minister should say to the department, “Well, you’re going to have to change your processes to allow that to happen.” It is inhumane that someone could be driving along Stirling Highway, could be picked up for drink-driving and could end up dead the following night in Merredin. That is the equivalent of what happened to Mr Ward. What would we think if someone driving home along Stirling Highway got picked up and, instead of being put in a lockup in Perth, got sent to Merredin and died on the way? It is inhumane. We have many work camps around the state and they should be utilised for such an offence. Sure enough it is different if a person is a flight risk or is violent, but when someone is in prison for drink-driving and is picked up in his country, he should be remanded there. That is about all I need to say.

I will say a couple of things about matters the Premier raised in his speech, particularly the Prostitution Bill 2011. I will be supporting that bill. Kalgoorlie has a long history with the Hay Street brothels. I believe the process of containment worked for probably a century. It seems to be falling down a bit now with the police not policing the old containment policy. If that is the case, we do need legislation. I commend the Attorney General for the bill. I had two or three major concerns about the first draft of the legislation. He listened to my concerns and the concerns of others. I just hope that the new Leader of the Opposition has a rethink on this bill and gives his members a free vote on this.

Mr P. Papalia: On what?

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: They have a free vote?

Mr P. Papalia: I didn’t hear what you said.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: I said now that the opposition has a new leader, it may be an opportune time for him to consider giving his members a free vote on the Prostitution Bill.

Mr P. Papalia: I tell you what: you lean over and get those blokes there to support you and we’ll talk about it.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: What? Members on this side have a free vote.

Mr P. Papalia: No, not a free vote. Get them to support your view and we’ll talk about it. If you can’t get your own government —

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: I am just asking, and the member for Rockingham, the new Leader of the Opposition, may consider it. I hope he does, because this particular issue of a free vote is one which a lot of members on both sides would welcome. I do not know why members do not have free votes. I suppose, being an Independent member, I have a free vote on everything all the time, so maybe I am a bit spoilt!

Mr P. Papalia: I thought you had the numbers on that side.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: Once we have a free vote, members may vote against something. Has the member for Warnbro thought of that? Members do not have to vote with us, so the bill may not get through Parliament. Yet I believe that if the majority of members of this chamber were given a free vote, the bill would get through. Some amendments may be proposed because of the totally free vote that would make the bill a better bill anyway. However, I doubt that the bill would get through if members on both sides were not given a free vote. I urge members on the other side to ask their new leader whether he can get that done.

MS J.M. FREEMAN (Nollamara) [3.25 pm]: I will make some comments before I go into issues that concern what is now the Mirrabooka area; I, too, have had changes made to my electorate. After the next election there will no longer be a seat of Nollamara; it will go into the seat of Mirrabooka. The suburb of Nollamara will become part of the electorate of Morley, which is somewhat unfortunate for me because I live in Nollamara. I considered nominating for Morley very strongly and wanted to continue to represent the people of the area where I live, but I had great representations from people in Mirrabooka and felt that I had been part of that community and would continue to be so.

I welcome the new leader of the state Parliamentary Labor Party. Clearly, in this time of political turmoil in the federal system, I am particularly proud of the Western Australian state Parliamentary Labor Party. I commend

the previous leader, Eric Ripper, who has spent his working life serving the public of WA. He was always excellent in supporting me as a new member of Parliament, and I want to put it on record that I appreciated his work as leader, his work in Parliament over the years, and his work in government roles. I also want to acknowledge the respect that Mark McGowan has given Eric Ripper in this house, publicly, and that should make members very proud to be part of the WA state Parliamentary Labor Party.

I noted in last year's Premier's Statement the completion of the Alexander Drive–Reid Highway overpass. That was a commitment made by the previous Labor government and met by the current government. One of the benefits of the economic downturn was that, of the \$72 million committed to that project, there was excess to what was required, which thankfully resulted in additional funds being allocated to the Mirrabooka Avenue–Reid Highway overpass. Abigroup Limited, the construction group, was already there; it had an onsite area and could come across to complete the Mirrabooka Avenue–Reid Highway overpass. It was great to see this being opened last year, and I again put on record my congratulations to Bob Kucera for the work he did in advocating very strongly for that overpass when he was member for Yokine. I also congratulate the community of that area, particularly the Balga Action Group, Main Roads and Abigroup for their good work in getting these two projects done with such efficiency and such effective use of money.

Transport is a big issue in the area. I have raised the issue before about how in the Mirrabooka area cars and private transport are used a lot, and how that has caused great problems for the community as urban development and infill has increased. It was with great pleasure that I saw the government's much-anticipated transport plan, which outlines a light rail network between Mirrabooka and the city. I welcome that and thank the government for it. I was a bit disappointed that the Premier did not include it in his Premier's Statement; instead he was a bit vague and talked about the light rail system. I am happy if he wants to put it on record now that light rail will definitely be going ahead to the Mirrabooka area.

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: The people of Mirrabooka and the surrounding area would welcome it, and I certainly would welcome it. I have done quite a systematic transport survey of the area, transport being such a significant issue, and have run a number of public meetings to try to get people engaged in thinking about these issues so they can become committed to using public transport. I think that is what we also have to do—get people to realise that it is not enough to say that they would use it, but get them really committed to it. There was a strong positive response to a survey for light rail on all routes, but there was actually a greater preference for extending the train line east–west through Mirrabooka, along Reid Highway. There was a real sense that enabling greater rail access between suburbs was just as important as a rail link into the city and back out again. I was also pleased with the Western Australian Labor Party's policy of a heavy rail line along Reid Highway. Having both in the area I represent would be a perfect world; however, any measure that effectively meets the public transport needs in Mirrabooka and the suburbs in the eastern corridor would be welcomed by the people of those areas and by me as their representative. I welcome the Premier's comments from the floor that a light rail has to go through that area. The ability to respond to and provide feedback on the planning document closed in October 2011 and, while it is important to have the planning, it should also be delivered in the budget. I hope to see it in the upcoming budget.

I am very proud of the Western Australian Labor governments' record on increases in utility prices, which have occurred at an affordable rate. I understand that there are lots of historical aspects and that there are arguments from both sides. The stark and massive increases borne by the public have impacted on people in the Mirrabooka area. I have almost seen the creation of a working poor. People do the best they can, often working long hours. While the figures suggest that wages are rising to meet increases in the consumer price index and other costs, it is not happening in low-income areas. The costs are disproportionately being borne by an unfortunate sector of the community that does not deserve to be doing so. It is a demonstration of the two-speed economy in Western Australia, in which low-income earners battle.

I welcomed the Minister for Child Protection's announcement today that applications for the hardship utility grant scheme will no longer require a visit to a financial counsellor in the first instance. It is unfortunate that a person has to see a counsellor after multiple applications, because that does not recognise that the need to apply for it is at the wrong end in assisting low-income earners. It needs to happen beforehand. People find it quite demoralising to have to apply or reapply for assistance, being questioned about their budget and having people advise them to try things that they have already tried. At a recent event I spoke with a financial counsellor who told me that she could not live on the income of low-income earners. She said she has to look at their rental and other costs and systematically try to find other sources of income for them. Frankly, it is not that low-income earners in Western Australia do not budget well; rather, they just do not have the income to meet costs.

I have raised before and I raise again the need for ongoing sustainable assistance. A person can get assistance with sustainable energy items. Previously they went to the Office of Energy to get assistance, but now I assume

they go to the Premier's department. Some of that capacity is used to assist with fridges. Fridges are one of the most energy-sucking appliances. Unfortunately, people on low incomes tend to buy lower priced utility goods and the catch 22 is that lower priced utility goods often incur additional power costs. We must think about providing assistance that reflects the cost of renting in Western Australia and assistance to obtain efficient power-saving utilities, such as fridges, air conditioners and heaters. We need to be able to address that catch 22 situation.

In a recent analysis of cost of living pressures by the Centre for Policy Development, Ian McAuley quoted economist Paul Krugman, who said —

Productivity isn't everything, but in the long run it is almost everything. A country's ability to improve its standard of living over time depends almost entirely on its ability to raise its output per worker.

He said that in 1994. Ian McAuley responded —

By 'almost everything' Krugman is undoubtedly referring to the need for the gains from productivity to be fairly and efficiently distributed, and not confined to some privileged oligarchy.

I suppose in some ways I look a bit to what the member for Kalgoorlie said; that is, I, too, am concerned about trains and trucks that are run remotely. These are skilled jobs. I probably could not drive one of those huge trucks, although I am told that women are the predominant drivers of some trucks because they are much more cautious and safe with these things. I am not sure that I am that cautious and safe with driving. In any event what I am trying to say is that it concerns me that we seem to be losing a whole gamut of skilled jobs. I was talking to the member for Belmont today. When I first went to work for what was then the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union and is now United Voice, I was working with people who had made lifetime careers in the hospitality sector. Some had worked as maître d's. They had been paid a sustainable and living wage, so it was a career option. Nowadays when we train people in the hospitality sector we are just giving them initial skills so that they can get skills to go somewhere else. It is not an ongoing and sustainable occupation. We have just had the debate about retail trading hours and penalty rates were raised. We need to keep in mind that if we want a sustainable economy, we need to ensure that everyone in our community is paid a living wage, including penalties, for what they do and that their inherent worth and value in doing that is reflected and drawn out. That is absolutely important in how we structure things and costs within our society.

Housing is one of the biggest costs in our community. It represents the largest share of household budgets. Therefore, housing affordability is a major determinant of both the cost and standard of living. Indeed, it is an accepted view that many people are now reaching the 30 per cent threshold of housing affordability. Once they pass that, they are going into areas in which it is almost a rolling debt problem; they undermine any equity in their house or any capacity to sustain ongoing income. The 2009–10 ABS household expenditure survey indicated that people on lower incomes are more likely to pay more of their income to meet housing costs than those on higher incomes, due either to higher mortgage or rental costs. People who have higher incomes are more likely to own their own homes and have smaller mortgages proportionate to their income. We read about it in the paper. We are aware of it. We know that people are hurting out there. We hear it on the radio. It impacts on the people who cannot afford to outbid others on rent and who are left in desperate housing situations. I will give two examples of the housing crisis that I received late last year from two community workers who emailed me following an email that I had sent out; I cannot recall, but it might have been to wish people a merry Christmas. In one email a community worker said that she just wanted to vent about the Premier's comment that he did not believe homelessness was getting worse.

Mr C.J. Barnett: When did I say that?

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I think it was late last year. According to my notes, the email went on to say —

Then I had a Twa guy —

If people do not know, the Twa come from Africa. The email continued —

Then I had a Twa guy turn up at my office with a bag of clothes telling me he had slept in the park. He had been on the Homewest waiting list since 2006 and for the last three months (as advised by homewest) he has been staying with relatives and community members who have put their rental agreements in jeopardy by having him sleep on their floor or garages. I arranged for him to have a priority housing interview next Thursday but Homewest warned me that he must have evidence that he can't afford a private rental. I explained that the cheapest property we could find was a one bedroom for \$220 a week but that I believed that by assisting him to get this property we would be setting him up to fail. He receives \$484 f/n from Centrelink and he would receive \$110 f/n rent assistance he would then have to pay back \$25 p/f for a bond assistance loan leaving him \$129 per fortnight for food, bills, transport etc. They —

That is, Homeswest —

seemed to think this was ok. This is getting more and more distressing and frustrating. Every day I have desperate people ... who are begging me to help them get government house or a cheaper rental. There are so many focus groups, forums and assorted talkfest's apparently addressing these issues but nothing is changing and at the grassroots where we are face to face with men and women who are crying and begging for help it is very hard to keep positive.

Another worker emailed me some time last year or at the beginning of this year. That worker said —

Now more than ever housing is in an extraordinary-crisis mode. More and more of my clients are asking if I can find cheaper accommodation—which I cannot, and more and more are couch surfing, sleeping in cars and on the brink of homelessness.

In particular is one family of ten who need to vacate their tenancy by month end as it is being sold. The house that they are in is a tiny sub standard three bedroom house—hardly enough for them but it is a roof over their heads, albeit a leaking roof.

For me it seems 2012 will be focused on housing—or rather lack of.

In the area that I represent, this highlights the travesty of not releasing and building upon Department of Housing land on Milldale Way and Mirrabooka Avenue. I have raised this issue in this house many times. A large tract of Homeswest land is sitting, waiting to be developed, waiting to address some of this housing crisis and waiting to be used. Despite me banging on about it for the past three years, I have got nothing when it comes to that land being released. The land is bound by Mirrabooka Avenue, Chesterfield Road and both sides of Milldale Way. It amounts to seven hectares and was obtained by the government in a land resumption in the 1950s, yet it still sits vacant today, awaiting zoning. I was advised in 2010 that no action on the land is expected before 2011, and now it is 2012 and still the land sits vacant. In addition to available land for development being left wanting, the vacant land adds to the sense of urban decay in the area. It is covered in unkempt scrub that detracts from what the City of Stirling is trying to do with the Mirrabooka revitalisation project.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: It undermines the good taxpayers' and ratepayers' money that has been spent on the revitalisation project, if a vast piece of land adjacent to the area is not developed but left in a derelict state. It seems inconceivable to me, when there is such a demand and need for land, that the Mirrabooka land remains undeveloped and an eyesore to the people in the area. I am not complaining just about housing affordability and the lack of affordable housing; I have a solution. I have a huge bit of land in my area, and frankly, if the government does not develop it, all its banging on about all its good policies and plans do not mean dot, because it cannot demonstrate to the people I represent that it is effectively using land that is close to the city and available for use now.

Another land issue that I want to address is the Atlas Industries land in Mirrabooka. There are two issues with this land. The first relates to the impact on the groundwater. According to the Department of Environment and Conservation, past investigations have shown that the site's groundwater has been impacted by the landfill which, until 1997, accepted mixed household and industrial waste. That waste has since decomposed to create a leachate that has entered the groundwater and which includes ammonia, chloride, arsenic and hydrocarbons such as diesel. This is a serious issue that requires ongoing action from the Department of Environment and Conservation and the government. The department has issued an order for Atlas to track the plume and to make people aware of the difficulties. It has told people in the area to stop using bore water. I asked the minister's office today what is happening with that and whether Atlas has agreed to the order or whether the government will pursue a breach of that order. The government must make sure that this issue is taken seriously and that the issue of the order and the action from Atlas be undertaken. That is its responsibility. This has been going on for some period. It is a quiet little issue and no-one wants to ruffle anything because it does have an impact on houses in the area. There is a feeling of complacency with people not wanting to talk too loudly about it because, although the groundwater is contaminated, it is only a problem if bores are used. It is a problem. Bores are big things in that part of the world and we need to address it. It is a serious issue that requires ongoing action. The recycling plant is leased to Atlas until 2016. It has a permit to operate as a recycling plant until 2013. The government must make sure that the permit is not extended beyond 2013. That recycling plant should be closed and that land should be reclaimed.

I was pleased to see in the newspaper recently that the Minister for Planning and the Planning Commission will be reclaiming much of the land. The front part of the Atlas land is obviously privately owned, but the back part of the land was previously recreational. The land is not actually being reclaimed; it is being resumed. It will be brought back to recreational zoning for community use. The Planning Commission is suggesting that it may be

used for recreational playing fields. That is great news, but the community needs to see that happen by 2013; it needs more certainty. I understand that the Atlas land at the front is privately owned and also that the business requires some certainty. This should definitely not be at the cost of residents in the area.

The biggest and most pressing issue, as noted in an article in *The West Australian*, is that the State Housing Commission sold blocks in the Mirrabooka area, which is below the plume, to residents living in the area, despite the fact that it would have been aware, because the health department and government departments were aware, that there was groundwater contamination. Despite that fact—these are premium blocks—it sold the land without any details on the titles. There is one resident who now has a caveat on his land title, because he was the one who reported it when he got his bore water tested. I have said it on record, and I am happy to say it again and again: the government, in particular the Department of Housing, needs to assess its liability. It needs to come clean to the landowners in the area that it sold that land to, and it needs to compensate them for the impact on the value of their land, because it will have an impact. I think that is the only decent thing to do.

I wanted to raise the issue of bus shelters in the City of Stirling. I do not know whether members were here when I mentioned it before, but we have a real problem with the City of Stirling bus shelters. I do not know whether the member for Mount Lawley will concur, but we cannot get bus shelters, because the City of Stirling in March 2008 moved a motion to cease the practice of installing bus shelters or hardstand facilities at bus stops until the responsibility for this infrastructure is defined. It did that in March 2008.

When I started to dig into this, I found somewhere that the council had moved a motion. Why has it done this? The council said it is because the PTA will not meet the costs. I raised a grievance with the Minister for Local Government to say that he needs to sort this out. He says, “Yes, yes; this is a very serious thing. I’ll look into that”—this is November 2011. A week later I see in *The West Australian* that he is washing his hands of it and says that is not actually an issue that he can deal with; it is an issue for the Minister for Transport. Then I went to the Minister for Transport, after I had been to see the City of Stirling. The City of Stirling says it is happy to sit down with the PTA and discuss this so we can try to sort this out so that the people can get the bus shelter situation sorted out. Can we sit there and talk about it? The Minister for Transport’s office says, “No, we can’t deal with individual councils”—even though this is the only council that is not doing bus shelters. His office says, “What we need to do is find out what all the councils want to do. We will do that through the Western Australian Local Government Association.” WALGA puts out a survey, which has a mishmash of four options: do not do anything with bus shelters; do something with bus shelters; or do some things in between. It is, “There you go. I’ll give you four options and you tell us which option you prefer.” Frankly, it is a mess. Frankly, it is appalling. Frankly, one of the things that goes with all of this is that they are still not meeting some of their disability provisions. Meanwhile—

Mr P. Abetz: All the bus shelters are coming into Gosnells in my electorate.

Ms J.M. Freeman: Gosnells is still doing it. Thank goodness for Gosnells council, even though it does not want us to leave our bin lids open—but we will not go there.

The survey closes tomorrow, 24 February. Who knows what is going to happen then, how long it is going to take them to deal with the survey and how long it is going to take them to make a resolution about that? Now in March 2012 we are looking at five years—it stopped before that—before we can get any bus shelter action in the City of Stirling. Frankly, that needs to be resolved. It cannot be that hard to work out. Frankly, I reckon the PTA could take it back and make money out of it. If members think about it, bus shelters all have ads on them—most of them are ads that we put our faces on.

Mr P. Abetz: The council gets the money from that, not the PTA.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: No, the council gets money only because there is this thing about the bus shelters being the council’s responsibility. But the PTA basically puts the post in the ground. If it said, “We’ll put the shelters there, and therefore the shelters are our responsibility, as is the maintenance and all of that sort of stuff,” it could sell the advertising on the side of them. It could just get the local government out of it. It could make sure they comply with disability standards. We could have bus shelters that actually are not a mishmash. Frankly, either the councils are responsible in this space of giving what is part of ratepayers’ conditions and amenities in the area, or we get them out of this space. Frankly, something has to be resolved in the City of Stirling. The member for Balcatta cannot get a bus shelter outside Osborne Park Hospital. The member for Scarborough cannot get a bus shelter outside an aged care home, as I understand it.

When I mentioned that I wanted to do a grievance on bus shelters, I did get a bit of derision: “Bus shelters?” If we go to Stirling and talk about the issue of bus shelters, people get upset about it. Bus shelters are a core amenity for people. We want people to use public transport, and we cannot give them a basic amenity. Frankly, this government cannot even fix it. When I bring it up, I am told by the Minister for Local Government that he is willing to do something about it. But then he washes his hands of it. Then I go to the Minister for Transport, and

he says, “Sorry; I can’t do anything about it; you have to talk to the PTA”. No. The government has to sort out who has responsibility for bus shelters. The government has asked the Western Australian Local Government Authority to look at the four options: to do, not to do, and a mishmash between the two. Maybe some time in the not too distant future, hopefully, we will get a resolution.

I want to speak about education. We have heard a lot here today about independent schools. I have a couple of independent schools in the area that I represent. It seems to me that independent schools really just provide flexibility of staffing for principals. It is all about principals. So, I was cautious about it. I do not like the idea of independent schools because I think it undermines the idea of public schooling. At one independent school that I know of, one of the reasons it became an independent school is so that it can keep staff. That school is a hard-to-staff school. It has not been able to keep staff. After two years, when teachers finish their contract and become permanent staff, the principal cannot keep them because the department will not let him.

Dr M.D. Nahan: Is it primary or secondary?

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: It is primary. The principal cannot keep those staff, in a hard-to-staff school, so the school has to start all over again. The whole point of having independent schools is so that there will be flexibility in staffing and a capacity to keep staff. That school has not been able to do it.

The other problem I have identified is that principals find that it causes a bit of difficulty when they have kids at their school who are in the care of the Department for Child Protection. Do they really want that type of kid in their school, when it causes a bit of difficulty? So they might say, “We are an independent school, and we probably do not need you in our school, and it makes it a bit difficult, so please go to another school”. I have raised that with the minister and she assures me it is not happening. But let us be clear about this. The things that the independent schools are looking for, such as local selection, and the capacity to employ—all those sorts of things—should be available to every school. They should be available through the Department of Education. I do not doubt that the education department’s bureaucracy is enormous. The Department of Education is the largest employer in the whole of the state. Other than that, we have Burswood, which is the largest employer —

Mr B.S. Wyatt: West of Adelaide, member. It is the largest employer west of Adelaide.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: So the department will be bureaucratic in how it employs people. I agree that there are people in the education department who have been kept on contracts for far too long, and that principals lose good staff or they cannot manage. But that is not a question of changing a structure and calling it something different and disenfranchising some schools and not others. It is about fixing the employment practices so that we are not held back by a ceiling of full-time equivalents.

I want to talk about the community health nurse at Westminster and congratulate the Department of Health on putting that person there. I gather that is part of the plan to co-locate children and family services on school and other community sites. I think it is fantastic. I hope the department will keep funding the Koondoola Integrated Services Centre, because that is a great initiative, and also the Happy Kids initiative, which is a fantastic joint-funded program of the Department of Education that is run in schools in our areas. These are all innovative ways of keeping kids involved in school and building their capacity to cope and promoting resilience and social and emotional skills development. We can only welcome these things. Certainly it is in keeping with “The Health and Happiness of our Children” policy that the Labor Party has announced. Certainly it is something that we need in education. I think it is fantastic.

MR B.S. WYATT (Victoria Park) [3.54 pm]: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker; I appreciate your giving me the call. I am delighted to have a chance to speak in reply to the Premier’s Statement. As the Premier pointed out, it is the last Premier’s Statement, and therefore our last opportunity to reply before the election.

I will start by reflecting on an electorate officer of mine who passed away recently. Every one of us here no doubt knows and accepts that we spend a lot of time not necessarily in our office, but in our electorate, working hard. It is up to our electorate officers to do the vast majority of the hard work dealing day-to-day with our constituents. When I was elected to replace Hon Geoff Gallop in March 2006, Rose Sheridan had worked for Geoff for the entire time Geoff had been Premier of the state, since about 2001–2002, and she continued on working for me when I was elected as the member for Victoria Park. Rose was from Victoria Park; she lived in Morley until she passed away, but she grew up in Victoria Park and knew absolutely everyone. She knew the skeletons of every local prominent family in my area and the wonderful contributions everyone had made. At that time Rose’s sister, Jenny, was working for the federal member for Swan, Kim Wilkie, and recently finished working for the member for Warnbro. She spent a lot of time working for various members of the Australian Labor Party, and Rose worked with me right up until she passed away in December last year. She came on board when I was a very new, naive member trying to work out my role and what to do as a local member. She had great experience and great knowledge and taught me what it means to be a good local member of Parliament. I

think everyone knows that an experienced electorate officer makes our job of being an effective member of Parliament very much easier.

Ms J.M. Freeman: Can you teach us?

Mr B.S. WYATT: I am now looking around for another electorate officer to teach me how she was doing my job! Rose battled for many years with breast cancer before I became the member for Victoria Park and, unfortunately, it came back. She battled for two long years until she tragically and sadly passed away. I want to acknowledge Rose, her partner Collin and her sons, Adrien, Damien and Tristen, because they knew the extent of her commitment to the Labor Party, to Geoff before me and certainly to me to ensure we did our best representing the people of Victoria Park. Her passing was incredibly sad for the local community of Victoria Park. I want to put on the public record of *Hansard* that I owe a lot to Rose Sheridan and I thank her and her family for the extraordinary contribution she made to my local community.

On a happier note, my other electorate officer, Alison, whom I employed when I became the member for Victoria Park, had a baby girl, Willow, in July last year. I congratulate her and Arran Cook on the birth of Willow.

One of the most successful things I have been involved with in my electorate has been a local Homeless Connect project. People familiar with the issue of homelessness will be familiar with the City of Perth Homeless Connect, which is quite a large project, which brings various support groups and service providers into the city to provide services to homeless people. Three years ago now we decided in our electorate office that we wanted do the same thing in Victoria Park, but with much more focus on homeless people in my electorate. There are quite a few because it is an older inner-city electorate with a train line and Bentley hospital. It has a number of service providers, so there are a number of homeless people, which number tends to fluctuate with the season. However, we ran our second Homeless Connect in 2011 and more than 300 guests came along. We had 40 service providers in 2011, which was double what we had in 2010. I want to acknowledge the contribution of Riverview Community Services and the team there. Riverview is a large church based in Burswood in my electorate. It calls in people from all over Perth. Its community services team is very small, however, it can mobilise an army if need be, and the team members really do a lot of the leg work with my office in organising the volunteers to ensure that we have enough of them—we have about 80 volunteers. They do things from greeting our guests when they arrive to taking them through the various service providers, and those include the Department of Housing, Medicare, Centrelink, Ruah Community Services, Transperth, Mobile GP, Holyoake and the mobile dental clinic, which, interestingly, always ends up pulling a swag of teeth. Every time we have the event a big swag of teeth is pulled. There has been some discussion about dentists and teeth work today, but the clinic also ends up pulling a swag of teeth, which is obviously great for the health of various homeless people. I want to make the point, and I wish the Attorney General was in the chamber, that we have not been able to get a commitment from the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages to come along. The reason I want it to come along is that in many cases a person needs identification and often on top of that they need a birth certificate. I did not realise until I sat down with a lot of the homeless people we were servicing what someone can and cannot do if they do not have ID; it is extraordinary. It is needed for basics through to a bank account and therefore access to the generosity of our federal government. It is extraordinary. I have tried now for a couple of years to get the registry involved. I emphasise to the Attorney General that if we can get it involved, it would be a great help, not only for me as the local member, but also for the people we are helping so that we can streamline things for them a lot more efficiently. I also want to mention the Town of Victoria Park that provides the facilities right in the heart of Victoria Park to ensure that we can host Homeless Connect successfully each year.

Members will recall last year that I pursued the Minister for Education and the government about Carson Street School in my electorate. It was without doubt one of the most passionate debates I have been involved with, because I am a community member on the council of Carson Street School. It does an exceptional job for children who have an incredible range of disabilities. If we speak to any of the parents, they say its conductive education program has been enormously successful. When the government cut funding without consulting those parents, and we know that it did, it really created a huge push-back from those parents. Ultimately, to its credit, the government reversed its decision. I am delighted about that because for what is a tiny fraction of the overall education budget, we are getting outcomes at the school through which we are engaging children in the education system in a process of learning that would otherwise not be available to them. Since that quite prominent public debate over Carson Street School and conductive education, it is extraordinary how many parents wherever I go, north or south of Perth, raise the issue of Carson Street School, because children come from all over Perth to attend it.

Some comments were made about the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and it was a huge success. In particular, I thought the business forum was exceptional. I spent a couple of full days at the business forum

and it really was an extraordinary opportunity to network with people from all over our commonwealth. It made me realise how little I knew about some of our African cousins and the fact that the various commonwealth countries in Africa are going through incredible change and economic growth. There are now incredible opportunities open to them. Their representatives came to Perth itching to learn what we have to teach here in Western Australia, bearing in mind that we are one of the world's leading mining, oil and gas economies.

Mr A.P. Jacob: We also have booming communities from most of those countries.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Absolutely; that is exactly right. We have not just the mining, oil and gas expertise to teach and also create employment opportunities, but also, as the member for Ocean Reef correctly points out, certainly in my electorate booming, growing communities in our electorates of people from all over Africa. CHOGM really did awaken me to how little I know about some of the commonwealth countries in Africa, and I am now endeavouring to correct that.

However, I thought one of the highlights of CHOGM—now that I am chair of Clontarf Aboriginal College I want to mention this—was the Queen's visit to Clontarf. It was an exceptional day. Clontarf absolutely turned it on with the opening of its new hostel that can accommodate 80 boys. At the moment, it is working on the hostel for girls. The Queen's visit and the international profile it brought to Clontarf is really still a strong buzz around Clontarf. I think it was a great opportunity to showcase Clontarf—we know the name Clontarf all over Australia—and it now is incredibly prominent. The Queen's visit in October 2011, whilst I am not a monarchist, certainly was an exceptional opportunity for those students to display to the Queen the struggles, challenges and hurdles they have to attend school in a way that most of us in this room really took for granted.

Another thing I want to say about my electorate is that every year—I put on notice some of my colleagues, in particular the member for Warnbro with whom I have raised this a number of times—I hold my annual Tuna Drive, although it is now a Tinned Fish Drive because of the paucity of our global tuna stock. The Foodbank headquarters is in my electorate. I visited Foodbank when I was first elected in 2006 and it had enormous stocks of food. I asked, "What is it you don't get? What is it you need at Christmastime that you don't get? You get huge amounts of donations." Doug Paling, the then CEO and founder, said, "Look, the one thing we don't get is tinned fish. The reason we don't get tinned fish is because it keeps, so it sells." At home, we generally keep tinned fish because it is never going to go off and we eventually use it, but it is an incredibly nutritious meal in itself. I made the commitment then that I would raise 1 000 tins of tuna, which at that time in 2006 was quite difficult because it was starting something from scratch; whereas every year since, 1 000 tins roll up before I even start advertising and calling for them. We have raised just over 10 000 tins of fish for Foodbank over the past five or six years, so it has been hugely successful. I have now committed to the new CEO that a number of members of Parliament, including the member for Warnbro, will make a similar commitment this year so that we can ensure more than just my 1 500 tins. I know that the member for Maylands is incredibly excited by the opportunity to also commit to raising 1 000 tins of fish for Foodbank.

I will comment on one individual and one organisation that received Town of Victoria Park Australia Day awards. The individual who won the Town of Victoria Park Australian of the Year is Peter Lesiter. I know Peter very well and he has been active in the Victoria Park community for an extraordinary amount of time. I remember Peter from when I was in year 10 when I was 15. Across the road from me was Vi Sands who I still speak with on a daily basis, it sometimes seems. Vi, who is now in her 90s, is a very active member of the Carlisle residents and ratepayers association. I met Peter because he would pick up Vi—who is the treasurer of the ratepayers association and has been for more than 20 years—on the way to the association's meeting. I have known Peter for more than 20 years. Peter was not only the driving force of the ratepayers, but also incredibly instrumental in ensuring that Burswood Peninsula became part of the Town of Victoria Park. We are going through a process now that will see the structures of our local governments change again; however, when the City of Perth was split and the Town of Victoria Park created, the City of Perth wanted to keep Burswood in its boundaries because of the presence of the casino—a significant ratepayer. If that had been taken out of the Town of Victoria Park, where it quite rightly belongs, that would have had a huge impact on the finances of a local government authority that had just been born. Peter Lesiter was instrumental in organising that campaign to ensure that Burswood remained in the Town of Victoria Park. The mayor, Trevor Vaughan, in his speech on Australia Day at the memorial gardens just outside the Town of Victoria Park, emphasised what a valuable asset Peter has been to the town and the community for well over 20 years.

The organisation that won a Town of Victoria Park Australia Day Award was Your PT Expert. I must confess that I had not come across Your PT Expert in great detail until I got to know the founder on Australia Day. I will quickly refer to a short extract from the Town of Victoria Park on why Your PT Expert won that award. It states that Your PT Expert is a local business that has been heavily involved in giving back to the community. It has been involved in several charity fundraising events such as Purple Haze Day when the team dressed in purple to volunteer to raise money for the Starlight Foundation, raising several thousand dollars to help raise awareness

and launch programs to encourage a healthy lifestyle Australia-wide. It took part in helping to feed a thousand people nationally on Christmas Day 2011, for which it raised enough money to help feed almost 100 less fortunate people in Perth. In 2012 it is hoping to launch its own charity organisation, which will focus on educating children and young people about living a healthy lifestyle and keeping them off the streets. This personal training, fitness, lifestyle and health organisation is doing incredible work in my electorate. No doubt every member of Parliament can reflect on all sorts of different organisations. I want to thank the many people and organisations in Victoria Park who do such incredible work.

For a minute I will reflect on my time as shadow Minister for Education.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr B.S. WYATT: In Western Australia we are blessed with a huge workforce. As the member for Nollamara has pointed out, our Department of Education is the biggest employer west of Adelaide. Nearly 24 000 teachers do an incredible job in some very challenging environments. We live in a big state with a small population scattered all over the vast expanse of Western Australia. However, I must say that the Gonski review, which has been handed down, presents us with an opportunity to look at the funding of education in a rational and sensible way. I do not mean that Gonski's recommendations will necessarily be accepted by the government, but we owe it to the review to consider the issues and recommendations that Gonski has raised. Very rarely do we have a review of such a significant part of what we do here as members of Parliament and the service that we provide. The response from the Premier has been juvenile by somehow framing it in a Canberra-bashing way. That is not the way in which we need to discuss the future funding of education, particularly when the Gonski review clearly points out that more needs to go into assisting those students who struggle the most. The Premier's response as a former Minister for Education does not do him or his government any service whatsoever.

The Barnett government has regionalised our education system by abolishing the old district structures and creating regions. Ultimately, my questions on notice have borne no fruit. I do not get answers from the minister to my questions on how that is going, but as I have travelled around the state over the last year it seems to me that that has simply been nothing more than a cost-cutting exercise, particularly in regional Western Australia. The teachers in Albany and a range of professionals who educate our children are isolated from their regional executive director, who is based in Bunbury. They tell us that they no longer have the services and the support they once did. The minister can get up as many times as she wants and say that there has not been any cost cutting, but the teachers and staff of our schools know that is simply not true.

I refer to the independent public schools initiative. Has there ever been a more ham-fisted attempt at reform? Many MPs have said that the initiative has been well received by not only principals, but also school communities. We have seen that. I think the minister said that 40 per cent of all public schools have applied to become an independent public school, but the education minister has not said one word about the Auditor General's report "Right Teacher, Right Place, Right Time: Teacher Placement in Public Schools", released in August 2011. That was scathing, and I want to quickly quote one paragraph from the findings of the Auditor General. It states —

DoE —

That is, the Department of Education —

has not undertaken a structured and comprehensive risk analysis of the implications of using a devolved model of recruitment. As a consequence the risks associated with changing these processes have not been fully identified or adequately considered.

The government makes a reform—it is a significant reform—of that scale and no risk analysis has been done. No thought has been given by the department to the implications of doing this for other schools. The government says that it is still committed to an education system. I dare say it is not, because it would have done the risk analysis to see what the implications are for other schools in the system. On page 8 of the Auditor General's report, the findings go on to state —

DoE will not know —

This is important —

if the changes to staffing processes are delivering benefits until it establishes clear objectives and performance measures, in particular:

- The objectives for the new staffing processes have not been fully defined and linked to strategic and operational planning.
- DoE is not tracking key data to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of its staffing processes.

- DoE has not estimated the costs of its new staffing processes, or its cost effectiveness compared to central placement.

Yesterday, the Minister for Transport got up and said, “We’re doing all these wonderful things surrounding a new stadium.” I asked the Treasurer what the cost is. He has absolutely no idea, and again we have the Auditor General saying that, firstly, the department has not even done one risk analysis; secondly, it has no measure of success of the IPS initiative; and, thirdly, it has not even thought about the cost implications. For heaven’s sake; this is the Auditor General, apparently the opposition’s best friend, confirming that the Minister for Education is trotting along behind the Premier, implementing his policy ideas! If the government is going to have a significant reform such as the IPS initiative, it should do the work so that we know the measures of success and we know the implications for staff, in particular, as the Leader of the Opposition said, in hard-to-staff schools.

One final point of reflection on education is the issue of truancy. Again, the Leader of the Opposition made the point that one of the very first things the Minister for Education did was slash the budget for the participation directorate by 50 per cent to save, from memory, about \$4 million. As a result, we have the Minister for Education fretting about students in Bali rather than the students who have completely fallen out of the system—absolutely fallen out of the system. The number of children whose whereabouts are unknown has increased by 80 per cent in one year. The minister’s first dorothy dixer for the year was about the tracking system for Aboriginal students. Remember last year she blamed that 80 per cent blow-out on Aboriginal students moving around out in the Ngaanyatjarra lands. Now she has this wonderful process and apparently it has been fixing that. To be perfectly frank with members, although I agree that students should be in school rather than on holidays, if a student has a supportive family environment and that family takes that student out of school and away on holiday, that is not the student I am going to fret over. because they have a family environment within which they are getting love, support and care, and that probably means that they will attend school 95 per cent of the time. I am concerned about those students who the participation officers were designed to ensure did not fall out of the education system. However, the minister has slashed the budget for those officers, and she then went and wrote an opinion piece about the kids on Kuta Beach. For heaven’s sake! The priorities of this government, and this minister in particular, are completely skew-whiff.

I have one other point. My own timing of my speech has been completely overrun, of course. I made some comments yesterday about the future fund, and I was interested to see, as I said, the one-sentence reference between Sunday trading and the lobbyists in this year’s Premier’s Statement. He said yesterday, “Well, I can do this because Peter Costello did this.” Peter Costello created a future fund. Ultimately, the Premier is right; Peter Costello created a future fund, but that was to fund outstanding superannuation liabilities for the commonwealth public service. Is that what the Premier will do with his future fund? Is that what it is for? In Peter Costello’s second reading speech, when he introduced the legislation to establish that future fund, he emphasised the fact that he had paid down the net debt of the commonwealth, which at the time he became Treasurer was \$96 billion. We are all familiar with the \$96 billion black hole that Peter Costello inherited. Peter Costello then said —

With net debt now under control, we are turning our attention to addressing the largest single liability on the government’s balance sheet: unfunded public sector superannuation.

They are key words: “net debt now under control”. My advice to the Premier is that net debt is not under control. It is ballooning at an alarming rate. Unlike in Peter Costello’s situation, the largest single liability on the government’s balance sheet is net debt; it is not the unfunded public sector superannuation, which in 2009–10 was about \$8 billion. The net debt is blowing out well beyond that. On one level the Premier is correct in his comments that Peter Costello did it; however, he did it after he had resolved the net debt situation of the commonwealth.

In 2005, then Prime Minister John Howard made the point in *The Sydney Morning Herald* —

The future fund, which will hold tens of billions of dollars of future surpluses after the Government becomes debt-free, will be managed at arms length from the Government, contrary to the preference stated ...

This is the point: if the Premier is going to model the future fund on Peter Costello’s future fund, he has to also model it on the rationale that Peter Costello used to establish the future fund. The commonwealth government was awash with cash at the time and debt was paid off. The net debt position had not been under control, but was gone. That is not the situation the Premier now finds himself in. If he is to focus on Peter Costello’s modelling, he had better actually also focus on the fact that the debt was paid out.

I make this final point: the utilities are nothing more than a cash cow for this government. It is now using Western Power and the Water Corporation as nothing more than a revenue base for a government that is starved of funds. We recall the fact that the government demanded an efficiency dividend on our utilities. I will read an

email written by the former chief executive of Western Power, Doug Aberle, concerning the action required on the five per cent efficiency dividend. The email is dated 25 May 2011. It was written after his meeting with the minister —

It is understood by all parties that;

- what Govt have classified as discretionary (the base for the 5% efficiency) is significantly overstated; and
- a cut of this magnitude cannot be expected to have no impact on services; ...

The former CEO of Western Power made the point that the government has completely gotten wrong how discretionary expenditure is defined. As a result, the cuts will have an impact on services. The government can carry on all it likes; however, the former CEO of Western Power made the point that if these cuts are made, it would find them, but there will be an impact on services. That is the reality the government will have to face up to at some point.

I am also the shadow minister for Indigenous affairs and native title. I want to commend the government. I have done this publicly—I have written publicly—and I want to say it here: the in-principle offer made to the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council is a positive step. I hope the Nyoongah people are able to have a constructive discussion about the government's offer. As my piece published in *The West Australian* stated, I believe this is an opportunity for the Nyoongah people to move beyond the very divisive debates around native title. I agree that the native title process is not exactly picture perfect; however, the purpose of this place is not to debate the offer. The Nyoongah people have an opportunity to hopefully move on from those incredibly divisive debates. I await the outcome of those negotiations between the government and the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council over the coming months.

MR P. ABETZ (Southern River) [4.25 pm]: The electorate of Southern River is located on the suburban fringe of Perth and takes in the suburbs of Canning Vale, Southern River, Huntingdale and, until the next election, the Forest Lakes part of Thornlie. It is with some sadness that I will lose this area, as I have thoroughly enjoyed serving the people in Forest Lakes, particularly those in the Forest Lakes Lifestyle Village and the Forest Crescent Primary School, among whom I have made good friends. I certainly want to commend Mr Ian Anderson, the principal of Forest Crescent Primary School, for the excellent job he is doing at that school.

Being on the suburban fringe of our city, house prices are somewhat lower than those closer to the central business district, and that, coupled with the excellent schools—both state and private—in the area, makes the area attractive to aspirational younger families and many newer Australian families. Our schools are the hubs of our dynamic community. Almost every public school in my electorate is an independent public school. The Barnett government's IPS initiative has been extremely positively received in our area, and as more freedom is given to schools to make their own decisions, the greater the educational and financial benefits will be. Serving on the board of the Bletchley Park Primary School, which is an independent public school, has certainly given me firsthand insights into the benefits of this initiative. I believe still greater autonomy needs to be given to schools, including the freedom to use local businesses to supply goods and services when they can do so at lower cost to the school than can businesses that have whole-of-government contracts. My wife, Jenny, who is very supportive of my role as a member of Parliament and never complains about the long hours I am away from home, has been appointed to serve on the board of Canning Vale Education Support Centre—a role that suits her well as she was a teacher of special needs children many years ago.

Although all our schools have a school oval, the reality is that there are simply not enough sportsgrounds in the Southern River–Canning Vale area, resulting in clubs struggling to find venues and needing to restrict the number of children they can enrol. After a prolonged search for a suitable site, I am delighted that the Premier, the Minister for Planning and the Minister for Sport and Recreation have given their in-principle support for lot 166 Clifton Road in Canning Vale, which is a 66-hectare government-owned site and former sand quarry, to be developed into a major regional sporting complex. The Minister for Sport and Recreation has made available to the City of Canning a grant of \$25 000 to contribute to a feasibility study, and the Minister for Planning is scratching around to find some funds to increase that to \$50 000 to match the City of Canning's allocation of \$50 000, making a total of \$100 000 for the feasibility study and preliminary planning. I took the initiative to form the Canning Vale Community Sporting Association Incorporated to provide local sports clubs with a single voice for dealing with the government on this project and other sporting issues.

Being on the outer suburban fringe, public transport in my electorate needs to continue to develop. I am delighted that representations I have made to the Minister for Transport have resulted in some additional buses in which the government has invested being allocated to my area, enabling a doubling of the frequency of the 206 and 207 bus services, and the expansion of the 517 bus route in the mornings and afternoons to take students between Southern River and Southern River College, which is located in a neighbouring electorate. Although

Southern River College is not the school of first choice for many parents in Southern River, I am pleased to be able to put on record the excellent work being done under the leadership of the principal, Everal Mioceovich, in developing the university pathway, including the establishment of the energy and minerals academy, which is making the school more attractive for aspirational parents to send their children to.

I go back to public transport. When I do my meet-and-greets in shopping centres, the most common question is: “When do you think we are going to get the railway coming through Canning Vale?” There was great dismay in my electorate when “Public Transport for Perth in 2031” recommended that the extension of the Thornlie line to the Mandurah line via Canning Vale should be among the third-stage projects, and therefore would not be scheduled until after 2031. By that date, I may well have been promoted to glory and will no longer be in need of public transport! The population of the area is rapidly growing and my constituents and I know that this \$240 million or \$250 million project must happen much sooner than 2031. When the Premier visited my electorate in July last year, he indicated his willingness to consider moving that date forward considerably. However, the disastrous GST carve-up, starving our state finances of our share of the GST that we collect, will apparently drop to 55c in the dollar in the coming year. Our state revenue will drop by \$250 million, which is just the amount needed for that public infrastructure project. What particularly galls me is that our share of the GST is discounted by our royalties —

Mr P. Papalia: How much does shifting the stadium to Burswood cost?

Mr P. ABETZ: A little less.

Ms J.M. Freeman: Are you sure?

Mr P. ABETZ: I have not looked into those figures.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr P. ABETZ: I do not know what the cost is. What galls me is the fact that our share of GST is discounted for royalties income from mining but the massive tax taken from gambling in states like Victoria and New South Wales is not taken into account when calculating their share of the GST. It seems to me that the revenue gain from honest, hard work from mining is not valued in Canberra but revenue streams generated from the gambling industry, with all its appalling social consequences, is given preferential status. That desperately needs changing.

Mr P. Papalia: I reckon Tony Abbott should do something about that.

Mr P. ABETZ: I am sure he will.

There was a bright spot for my electorate in the “Public Transport Plan for Perth 2031” report. That report recommends building a satellite car park at the site of the proposed Canning Vale markets railway station, for which I have been advocating over the past two and a half years, as an initial step for the future extension of the Thornlie–Mandurah line. This car park would be a satellite car park for the Murdoch station, which by 7.00 am is always full. People could park in Canning Vale and the many buses running along Ranford Road to Murdoch station could take them to the station in just a few minutes without even requiring the operation of any additional bus services. Many benefits to the community would flow from extending the Thornlie line through to the Mandurah line. I have written to the parliamentary secretary about the Burswood stadium proposal. If the Thornlie line were extended to the Mandurah line, it would enable people who live in the southern suburbs to get on the train at Burswood, come down the Thornlie line, get dropped off and go straight through to Mandurah without having to change trains. That would certainly reduce the pressure on Perth railway station after an event at the new stadium.

Mr J.E. McGrath: I thought that the Thornlie line was going to run into the Armadale line.

Mr P. ABETZ: No, it comes off the Armadale line into Thornlie and will go through Nicholson Road and Canning Vale, and then to the Canning Vale markets. Jandakot will also have a station and Cockburn Central station is where it will join along the freeway.

Mr J.E. McGrath: Would the train originate in the city and go down the Armadale line and then cut through to the Mandurah line?

Mr P. ABETZ: Yes. It takes in the Thornlie line. Another benefit is that if there were a major accident on or structural problem with the bridges on the freeway and the railway line had to be closed, the southern railway system could continue to operate, at least on a limited schedule, along the Thornlie line and into the city.

If the railway line were built, people could use public transport to get to the Tom Bateman Reserve, which hosts the Western Australian baseball stadium opposite the proposed Nicholson Road railway station. There is no public transport to that huge stadium and when an event is held there, the car park is chock-a-block.

Mr A.P. Jacob interjected.

Mr P. ABETZ: They have developed that very well.

I understand that Canning Vale is the fifth largest employment area in Perth yet it is very difficult for people to catch public transport there. Building a railway station in Canning Vale would enable the people who work in that area to catch public transport. Some people who work there travel from as far away as Mandurah and for them to catch public transport to work in the Canning Vale industrial area is impractical. If the railway line came through there, it would certainly be very workable.

I move now to local roads issues. Thanks to the state and local government funding, some federal funding and developer contributions, most of the major arterial roads in the Southern River electorate have now been duplicated, but we still have two major bottlenecks that I keep bringing to the attention of the minister responsible for Main Roads. The first is the intersection of Nicholson and Bannister Roads, which requires an upgrade. It will sound almost unbelievable when I tell members that this project was fully funded by the Cities of Canning and Gosnells and the state government. The funds were committed and the work was to have commenced in July last year, but due to the unwillingness of the majority of the councillors in the City of Canning, who have rejected the professional advice of their officers, this project has still not begun, much to the chagrin of the residents in my electorate and the frustration of the professional staff at the City of Canning. The ongoing refusal of the mayor and the majority of the councillors to accept the professional advice of their capable and experienced staff has resulted in many senior staff resignations. In fact, I have here a copy of an email from the project manager, Colin Leek. The refusal of the council to proceed with this project was the final straw that broke the camel's back and caused him to quit his job. To demonstrate his expertise, his new job is as a lecturer in civil engineering at Curtin University. He is a person of great experience and knowledge. I certainly hope that the inquiry into the City of Canning announced by the Minister for Local Government in February will bring about some resolution of this most unsatisfactory situation.

To give another example of what is going on at the City of Canning, it had a fully federally funded \$600 000 black spot allocation to upgrade the intersection of Centenary Avenue and Manning Road. It chose not to proceed with it, even though the engineers had done the design work, because, apparently, it would not look good to see City of Canning work crews working at the intersection because the citizens of the City of Canning might think that work would not be that much benefit to the citizens of the City of Canning. Goodness me! Lots of people living in the City of Canning use that intersection. It is a nightmare getting out of there, especially when lectures at the nearby university have finished. To have a black spot funding allocation handed back is just unthinkable. But that is what has happened.

The fact is that, although the design work is finished and the money is in place for the Nicholson Road–Bannister Road intersection, the mayor and some of the councillors are refusing to accept the advice to get on with it, and as a result it takes residents 20 minutes every morning to get through that intersection, which, once upgraded, should not be a problem to get through at all.

A few hundred metres from that intersection is the Nicholson Road–Garden Street roundabout, which is a major bottleneck in the evenings. Contrary to the claims the member for Gosnells made—I think it was—yesterday, I was on to this problem a long time before he was. It was largely due to my representations that Main Roads performed a major study of the traffic flow in the area that produced a helpful report with a proposed solution that the City of Gosnells has gratefully received. I am pleased to say that the Minister for Transport was very positive about my representations to seek funding for the City of Gosnells to be able to remove that bottleneck as soon as possible.

The Ranford Road–Bannister Road intersection was upgraded a little while ago, but the lane markings need changing; that is, we need two right-hand turn lanes into Bannister Road out of Ranford Road. It is a minimal cost. I have written to the Minister for Transport about that and hopefully it will be possible for that work to be done.

I would like to change focus for a moment onto the subject of drugs and alcohol. Being with younger families in my electorate, I find one of the things that many parents are concerned about is whether their kids will end up drinking excessively or dabbling in drugs. Some members may be aware that prior to entering Parliament I ran a drug rehabilitation support group in Willetton, and so I have seen close-up the horrendous consequences of drug and alcohol abuse not only on the person consuming the substances, but also on their family and friends.

Firstly, I want to mention illicit drug use. The latest National Drug Strategy Household Survey shows us that 52 per cent of Australians aged 14 to 25 years have used illicit drugs at some point in their lives. In Sweden, only nine per cent of persons aged 16 to 29 years have ever used drugs. That should make us ask: what has Sweden done to achieve such an amazing result, given that in the 1970s Sweden had the highest rate of illicit drug use of any country in Europe? In the past year, only two per cent of Swedish persons aged 16 to 29 had used illicit

drugs, compared with 33 per cent of Australians aged 14 to 25. In Sweden, only 1.5 per cent of teenagers are dependent users, compared with 8.2 per cent in Australia. Clearly the Swedes are doing something that is impacting on young people's attitudes towards drugs.

When I was in Sweden as part of the Education and Health Standing Committee fact-finding tour in January last year, we discovered what the Swedes are doing differently. Sweden has made it an offence to be under the influence of an illicit drug. This gives police the power to arrest anyone who they reasonably suspect is under the influence of an illicit drug. However, they do not take those people to the police station; they take them to a government rehab facility. That government rehab facility tests them.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr P. ABETZ: The police do not take those people to the police station; they take them to a rehab centre where they are tested. If they test positive, they are given a choice: they either stay at the rehab centre or go to the police station and are charged. If they go to court and are found guilty, the court orders them into compulsory rehab. At any time a person can opt to leave the rehab facility if they have gone there voluntarily, but if they do, they will find themselves charged and facing court. The consequence of the system in Sweden is that around 97 per cent of the people who test positive to illicit drugs opt for rehab and do not want to go to the police station, and over 70 per cent of those who enter rehab never come to the attention of authorities again. Those who do not want to stay in rehab and who face court are ordered by the court into involuntary rehab. Surprisingly, the success rate for those who are ordered into involuntary rehab is actually higher than the rate for those who voluntarily admit themselves to the rehab facility, which indicates that the long-held view among most Australian drug counsellors that compulsory rehab cannot work is simply wrong.

The Australian illicit drug use rate is high because identified users are not diverted into rehab on the first occasion of their apprehension. In Sweden, anyone who is identified as a drug user by police, hospital staff, ambulance officers, medical personnel, family members, employers or others is tested, and if they test positive, they are required to enter rehab.

Ms J.M. Freeman: Is that for all drugs?

Mr P. ABETZ: Marijuana; any illicit drug.

Ms J.M. Freeman: Even for marijuana?

Mr P. ABETZ: Even for marijuana, yes.

Many of the families I dealt with when I was running the drug rehab support group desperately wanted their son or daughter to enter rehab but were powerless to get them into rehab, and sometimes when the addicts wanted to go into rehab, there was no room in the rehab facilities. I certainly long for the day when our state has legislation similar to that which is in place in Sweden so that we can deal effectively with our drug issue. It is time that our drug treatment services shifted gear from so-called harm minimisation to being strongly focused on moving people into rehab so that they can move towards a drug-free lifestyle.

Ms J.M. Freeman: Member, do you agree with Sweden's very restrictive alcohol laws as well?

Mr P. ABETZ: I think they are excellent, actually.

Ms J.M. Freeman: They've got enormously restrictive alcohol laws, so that everyone goes across to Denmark to buy their alcohol.

Mr P. ABETZ: Some people do, but it is a very small amount.

Ms J.M. Freeman: Have you ever been to Sweden? Have you tried to buy alcohol in Sweden?

Mr P. ABETZ: I am a non-drinker, so it does not worry me!

Diversion into rehab facilities for illegal drug use is now proven to be world's best practice for the reduction of drug use.

Very briefly, in the last few minutes I have, I want to say something about alcohol. Alcohol has long been part of Australian culture, and throughout a relatively short history it has been abused by a minority within the community. What is most concerning is that the earlier patterns of alcohol consumption have changed; we have moved to a culture of binge drinking, which is causing a major blow-out in state government expenditure. The Education and Health Standing Committee's report No 10 on alcohol tells us that, as a state government, we spend more than \$2 billion a year dealing with the direct consequences of excessive drinking. Just imagine if we could cut \$2 billion off our state government expenditure. We could build a new Fiona Stanley Hospital every year; we could build a southern railway line, plus more, every year. Indeed, just one-eighth of that amount would be sufficient to extend the Thornlie railway line to the Mandurah line, and build all the stations and car parks in

between. We could put an extra lane on the freeway south, and once we had done that, we could even build an extra lane on the freeway north.

With an ageing population, our health system will continue to come under increasing pressure. Predictions are that there simply will not be the specialist doctors available who are needed to look after our people. Given that a National Health and Medical Research Council survey found that 48 per cent of people in Australia regularly drink above the recommended guidelines for reducing the risk of long-term harm, it is not surprising that excessive consumption is eating into government expenditure. If we want a low-taxing government, we need to reduce the abuse of alcohol in this state. If we want to reduce state debt, the best way we can do it is to reduce the damage that alcohol is causing. Imagine saving \$2 billion a year; it would make a huge difference to our ability to reduce debt.

In Western Australia the average annual consumption of alcohol is 12.4 litres of pure alcohol per person, compared with the national average of 10.4. That is 20 per cent higher than the national average. We are the tenth highest alcohol consuming jurisdiction in the world. I want to put on record my disappointment with the government that I am part of in its response to the alcohol report by the Education and Health Standing Committee. The government rejected the committee's recommendation that the government develop a strategy for reducing alcohol consumption to the level of the national average.

In Indigenous communities, we have seen the benefits of liquor restrictions; they have resulted in a significant reduction in alcohol consumption and a massive reduction in the workload of police, enabling them to devote more time to proactive policing. Given the contribution that alcohol makes to our road toll, to domestic violence and to poor health outcomes, it is time that every one of us in this place, as leaders in our community, made a greater effort to see what we can do in our homes, in our schools, in our sports clubs and in the other groups that we are part of to curb that culture of excessive drinking that seems to have become mainstream. When 48 per cent of people admit to regularly drinking at levels that are known to be dangerous to their long-term health, we cannot dismiss the problem as being just a very small minority. Our culture is largely shaped by what parents teach their kids at home, by their example and by what is taught in our schools.

That brings me to the Gonski report. A preliminary glance at this rather large document indicates that Mr Gonski thinks that throwing \$5 billion more at schools is somehow going to improve education. I suggest it will not. The research consistently shows that it is the quality of the teaching that makes the biggest difference. Research shows that the quality of teaching can be most improved by the mentoring of new teachers, giving teachers feedback on their teaching, providing a sound curriculum and giving schools the ability to make their own decisions on the allocation of resources, which is an opportunity that the independent public schools are being given to some degree. Some extra funding for education will certainly be very welcome, particularly for schools with a disproportionate number of children with special needs. However, until Western Australia gets its fair share of the GST, we simply will not have available the extra \$300 million plus that Mr Gonski wants the state government to be investing in education.

In closing I would like to mention that each year I have the opportunity to go to Warburton, an Indigenous community in the Ngaanyatjarra lands, to run a holiday program. I have been doing that for over 10 years. There I see the impact of the influence of parents on education. If parents are supportive and make sure their kids go to school, the kids go to school. If the parents do not care, their kids do not go to school. No amount of money from the state government will actually change that. There has to be a change of attitude within a community. The whole community has to say that they want their kids to go to school. I remember well speaking with Livingston West, one of the elders of that community. I do not know what his age is but I guess that he is well into his 60s. He grew up in the mission days. He told me that he can read and write very well. His eyesight is failing a little now so reading is getting a little harder. He told me that his parents made sure that he went to school every day, because if the kids did not miss one day of school in the term, their mum would get a new dress or whatever and their dad a new shirt or jacket or whatever. He said, "Mum and dad made sure we didn't miss one day of school because they wanted to make sure that they got that item of clothing or whatever it was." As I said, he can read and write. The tragedy is that some of his grandchildren cannot read and write. We have professional teachers at that school. The missionaries were not trained teachers but they were able to teach these people to read and write. Really the issue is very much one of the community needing to get behind the kids and making sure that they go to school.

Ms J.M. Freeman: Don't they need an incentive? It may not be a monetary incentive; it may be another incentive. We have had similar situations at our schools. It is about working with those families. You don't attack them, because if you attack them, they just move.

Mr P. ABETZ: Sure. The breakfast club that some of the mums have started there has increased attendance. That is brilliant. I congratulate the mums who have taken that initiative to increase school attendance that way.

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 23 February 2012]

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Mr John Bowler; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Peter Abetz

Ms J.M. Freeman: It is about ownership and incentive and all those things.

Mr P. ABETZ: It has to come from within the community. There are lots of communities in which the whole community needs to get together to address the issue of what they can do to make sure that their kids go to school, so that the educational outcomes for their kids are such that they have a chance in life to get a job and make their own way in this world.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr R.F. Johnson (Leader of the House)**.

House adjourned at 4.53 pm
