

budget, \$10 million has been allocated to fix this black spot. You might think that the state Labor government would say, 'That's fantastic; the Commonwealth government are now helping us to meet our responsibilities.' But, no, apparently they are not going to match the Commonwealth's funding offer. This is despite the fact that, for years, they have been promising my constituents that they would fix this black spot and build an overpass.

I would like to give the House some examples of where they have promised this. During the February 2005 election campaign, the member for Yokine, Bob Kucera, distributed a flyer headlined 'Traffic black spot solution: Bob Kucera delivers overpass construction commitment'. In the brochure it said:

The Gallop Labor government has thrown its support behind the construction of an overpass at the intersection of Reid Highway and Mirrabooka Avenue—one of the state's worst traffic black spots.

There is a picture of Bob Kucera at this overpass bragging about how he secured the money to build it. Of course, there were some carefully worded weasel words within the paragraph. It said that the Commonwealth government would need to find matching funds for this overpass to go ahead and that the state government were not prepared to fulfil their responsibility without the commitment from the Commonwealth.

In March 2006, Bob Kucera spoke to the *Business News*, which is a local paper in Western Australia. When asked why no overpass had actually been built, even though he had issued a brochure promising to do it, Bob Kucera said:

Without a commitment from the federal government for half the cost, it would be pretty difficult for the state government to do it.

If they come to the party tomorrow, there is a very strong case to get on with it.

Yet, since the commitment has been made by the federal government for \$10 million, the member for Yokine has said absolutely nothing. It turns out now that the state Labor government are not going to accept this funding offer. They have until tomorrow to accept it; otherwise it will be spent elsewhere.

Indeed, the federal Labor party have expressed their concern to my constituents about this particular black spot. I have a brochure here. The member for Melbourne was so concerned about this black spot that he went down to have a look at it with Bob Kucera. This is a brochure that was issued to constituents in my electorate. It reads:

Labor's federal shadow finance minister, Lindsay Tanner, was in Stirling recently to find out about the Mirrabooka Avenue-Reid Highway traffic black spot. At the 2004 election federal Labor to work with the state government to build this overpass and save lives. Local people need this black

spot fixed but the Howard government just will not listen. He is so concerned about it.

If the member for Melbourne is so concerned about this black spot in my electorate then why won't he pick up the phone to his state Labor counterpart in Western Australia, the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, Alana McTiernan, and ask her to accept the Commonwealth's money and fulfil her commitment—and I challenge him to do that.

In the 2004 election a brochure was issued to my electorate which says 'Government to fix WA's worst black spot: the Reid Highway and Mirrabooka Avenue intersection'. This is a Labor party brochure put out by Jann McFarlane, who was then the federal member for Stirling. A letter she wrote to my constituents headlined, 'Labor to fix Mirrabooka Avenue-Reid Highway Black Spot' said:

A Latham Labor government has pledged \$6 million to build an overpass. This project is strongly supported by the state Labor government and both governments will work together to deliver this vital project.

Yet never once, in all this bleating about this black spot, has one dollar been allocated by any relevant government to actually build this overpass. The first time it will ever happen will be after the 2007 budget, yet the state Labor government have said that they are not going to match this—(*Time expired*)

Workplace Relations

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (4.49 pm)—I want to take the opportunity in the adjournment debate this evening to endorse the statements of my colleague the member for Richmond and speak on behalf of the many hard-working nurses in our electorates. I want to put on the record the concern they have about the comments made by the Minister for Health and Ageing in this House this week. We have had a level of debate this week around the fact that the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations has commissioned some modelling to determine the impacts of either changing the current IR policy or expanding it. Indeed, the expansion options it was asked to look at included increasing the number of staff on AWAs across the country and, in particular, those who are state government employees.

Clearly that would be of concern to people like nurses and teachers, firefighters and so on. My colleague formerly worked as a police officer and I formerly worked as a teacher, so I think we have pretty well got them all covered. The issue of concern is that obviously when government ask for this sort of modelling to be done there has to be some intention to it. It is, one would assume, not a whim about which the government thought, 'That would be interesting to read on the weekend. Why don't we spend some taxpayers' money commissioning something to entertain ourselves with?' I give the government the benefit of the

doubt—and it is a long benefit of the doubt, given the topics in the House this week—that they would not be looking at wasting that money, so one must assume that this research has a purpose.

The Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations has scoffed at the idea that there is a secret plan. He says that it is merely research covering existing policies, having a cursory look at what would happen if the policies were reversed and what the costs of that would be. I do not know whether he is talking about his own reversal of the introduction of the so-called fairness test. Perhaps he is concerned that his own amendments are now going to have a negative impact on the government's industrial relations reforms, and he might be thinking of revisiting that after the election. I think that many people are suspicious that that may be the case. This was a series of issues that were of clear concern to state government employees.

We saw government ministers come to the dispatch box this week to have their little say about an ACTU campaigning strategy. Rhetoric and hyperbole are not uncommon in this place, but it seems to me that the Minister for Health and Ageing always manages to take it just that bit beyond the pale. I refer to his statements in the House yesterday where he was talking about the nurses union becoming involved in this campaign. His comments about the nurses participating in a political campaign were that they would be politicising every hospital. His actual words were:

... now you have the politicisation of every hospital.

Coming from this government, I think that is an amazing accusation. In the *Illawarra Mercury* today there is a letter from a parent who attended the opening of a new Catholic high school in the member for Throsby's seat. This parent was absolutely horrified by the extraordinarily political nature of Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells's address to the opening of that particular school. The parent made the point that the senator could not help but run an entirely political message to parents at the opening of a new school. I would suggest that if the government is particularly concerned about political campaigning tactics it might check its own backyard before it goes out and criticises unions for political activity, which one would think would have been one of the reasons why workers would have formed unions in the first place.

In particular, the Minister for Health and Ageing went on to say that nurses would be running around so busy with their political activism that they would be indoctrinating patients instead of giving them their medication. He said that they would be brainwashing patients instead of giving them the standard health care that they deserve at the bedside and that elective surgery lists were blowing out because nurses were doing this. It was just over the top. It was disgraceful for the

Minister for Health and Ageing, in particular, to attack nurses in that way.

The argument that working people are not able and do not have a right to be involved in political activity is the height of arrogance. It reflects a government that now thinks that anybody who dares to put an opinion of their own needs to be gagged. (*Time expired*)

Workplace Relations

Veterans: Legal Action

Miss JACKIE KELLY (Lindsay) (4.54 pm)—I find it extraordinary that the previous speaker could find anything that Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells said as extreme or extraordinary. She is a very valuable, conservative member of our party. Compare a speech by a member of parliament at a school opening with what is happening at my local hospital, the Nepean Hospital. Your Rights at Work pamphlets are plastered all over the fence along the main drag into Penrith and as you enter the hospital, and Your Rights at Work pamphlets are plastered over every notice board as you enter every lift at the hospital. There is a weekly barbecue with a free sausage sizzle for all the nurses so that they can come down and be indoctrinated by the unionists with absolute twaddle about a misguided campaign. I find the previous two speakers' efforts extraordinary at the very least. The only people waging a misguided and over-the-top campaign in this matter are the unions and those opposite who are standing up for them.

Mr Speaker, I rise tonight because, as you will recall, last night I brought to your attention the plight of a Mr Pearce who is a TPI pensioner. He was involved in the collision of the *Voyager* and HMAS *Melbourne* in 1964. He went through, inter alia, a lengthy process with solicitors who I feel were ambulance chasing rather than really giving him profound advice. He was presented with a letter, and I was quoting from that letter when I ran out of time in last night's adjournment debate. The letter said:

We estimate that the total legal costs payable to the Defendant—

which is the Commonwealth in this matter—

will be between \$150,000 and \$275,000 ... once we receive the Defendant's account we recommend you provide us with \$2,500 to pay the cost assessor to object to the terms of the account.

So they were already putting in delaying mechanisms. In fact the letter said:

This may be an effective delaying mechanism.

The letter continued:

... because you are a TPI pensioner it may be that the Defendant—

the Commonwealth—

will be prepared to await execution of the costs order until you and your wife are deceased.