

## Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, 31 May 2011

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### ESTIMATES COMMITTEES A AND B ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** I refer to the sixth dot point on page 77 of the *Budget Statements* referring to “promoting and protecting Western Australian’s interests within the Federation”. Could the Premier give some indication of what the government is doing to combat a declining share of GST payments from the commonwealth over the forward estimates?

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** That issue is consuming a great deal of government time and resources, and the issues of commonwealth–state relations. As Premier, I have a responsibility for commonwealth–state relations, although obviously in this case Treasury and the Treasurer have almost an equal role.

The requirements of commonwealth–state relations have been very demanding. The GST issue, which has been debated widely in the community and widely understood, has only been part of it. A huge amount of effort is still going into the so-called health reforms. Although in a clinical and technical sense that sits primarily with the health minister, a lot of the ongoing negotiations through the Council of Australian Governments are coordinated through Premier and Cabinet.

There are also negotiations over the resource super profits tax and the mineral resource rent tax, and probably, in the future, over disability insurance schemes and the like. The active agenda—not necessarily good agenda—of the commonwealth government demands a huge resource component. There are lots of significant meetings outside COAG itself, of senior members of the respective bureaucracies around Australia. Health is still unresolved after a year. I guess that is the main task.

Again, we need good people and people with experience in commonwealth–state relations. We are fortunate to have Mr Conran, who knows both sides of the Nullarbor fence.