

The Lure of Politics

Geoff Gallop's Government 2001–2006

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Introduction

At 10.00 am on 16 January 2006, Governor Stirling Tower in St Georges Terrace in Perth, Western Australia was abuzz. The media throng had gathered in the foyer and news was out that the premier, Dr Geoff Gallop, was about to make an announcement. The premier's office was on the twenty-fourth floor of Governor Stirling Tower, several other ministers and their staff were scattered up and down the building, the government media office inhabited the seventeenth floor. The Department of the Premier and Cabinet as well as Treasury and Finance took up most of the rest of the building so news of action in the foyer quickly spread. The foyer provided the meeting place between the office and the coffee shops and was the place to linger to see just who would be saying what to the media.



The news stunned and dismayed people throughout the building. Surrounded by family and colleagues, Gallop had returned from leave to announce his resignation from politics due to ill health. News spread across the airwaves around the State and through the national media. He said, in part:¹

It is my difficult duty to inform you today that I am currently being treated for depression...So in the interests of my health and my family I have decided to rethink my career... My commitment to politics has always been 100 per cent plus. I now need that time to restore my health and wellbeing. Therefore I am announcing today my intention to resign as premier of Western Australia and Member for Victoria Park in the state parliament.

It has been an enormous privilege and pleasure to serve this state and witness the wonderful progress that is being made...I would particularly like to thank the residents of Victoria Park for the support they have given me for nearly 20 years. In fact, what has made this announcement all the more difficult today is that I love being premier, I love the work, I love the state and I love its people.

I thank you for your cooperation and I wish you all well for the future.

In the days after his resignation, tributes flowed but the business of government had to go on and the new premier, Alan Carpenter, soon began to put his personal stamp on the way government and the public sector would operate. The state moved from leadership by a former academic with a passion for public policy, to a leadership by a former journalist. Change was expected. And change came. Within a month, the new premier had announced his intention to 'move 103 people and \$91.6m to other departments ... to streamline the (premier's) department and give it back more focus'.² Gallop had taken a leadership role

in several policy areas and Carpenter clearly intended a different approach.

But what could be learnt from the Gallop years? It is rare to find a political leader with an academic background in public policy—indeed such creatures are rare outside universities. I heard Gallop speak to a public sector audience only months before his resignation. He spoke with a sense of urgency about the need for ‘an effective and well-coordinated public sector to guarantee civilised life’.³ Like all ministerial speeches, this speech had passed through several layers—drafted for him in his department, edited in his office—but the final text he had written himself. Coordination was a theme that permeated his approach to reform. This book focuses on the reforms Gallop made to enhance coordination across the breadth of his government.

Few would argue that the style and capacity of individual leaders and the circumstances in which they operate impact on the approaches their government takes to coordinating government business and the way they interact with the public sector. In a federation like Australia, state premiers are at the apex of government within their own jurisdictions but are also part of the larger political arena at the national level where they are but one of several heads of government. They also represent their political party. The diary of any leader would demonstrate the demands on their time as industry and community groups as well as individuals seek an audience and no doubt offer advice on the best way forward in any number of policy areas. It may seem to the outsider to be a very powerful position with both the intellectual resources of the public sector and the resources of the state at their disposal. Their re-election, however, is dependent to a large extent on their achievements in direct service delivery in health, education, law and order; for the provision of infrastructure for which other ministers are generally responsible; and for the way they manage the difficult balance between environmental protection and industry development. How then do premiers best use their resources to coordinate

across the broad canvas of government business while also keeping the size of the public service to a minimum?

The relentless scrutiny of the media encourages governments to continually demonstrate initiatives in response to community concerns. It is a rare service that can be cancelled without causing concern to someone even though it may duplicate or even counter other services. The news is in the loss of the service to a small number of people rather than in the resources saved or better outcomes for the community as a whole. With the ongoing demand to respond to individual needs and wants, while at the same time minimising the cost of government, how can leaders best determine the way ahead? What were the tools Gallop had at his disposal, which tools were most appropriate in the various circumstances he encountered, and how did he use those tools? How did he know his craftsmen across the public sector would recognise and want to use the tools? In the twenty-first century should they have been honing the use of existing tools or finding new tools?

Gallop—the man

Gallop was well prepared for premiership. He had demonstrated a keen interest in politics since school, intellectually he was very able and he had wide experience in local and state politics. He counted the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, among his close friends. During his time as premier, Gallop was driven by a strong sense of public duty and a commitment to making a difference. His compassionate nature and high standard of personal integrity underpinned how Gallop operated and the priorities he set for his government. A perfectionist and an idealist, Gallop recognised the need in politics for compromise but found the cynical attitudes he had to confront far less acceptable. He often referred to this situation as ‘swimming in a sea of cynicism’.

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He was born in Geraldton, Western Australia, on 27 September 1951—one of the baby boomer generation—and graduated from the University of Western Australia in 1971. He was the 1972 Western Australian Rhodes Scholar and was among the first group at the new Murdoch University in Perth from 1975 where he taught in social and political theory. Gallop has a long list of academic awards including: the Graeme McAndrew Memorial Award, Kingswood College UWA 1971; the John Storey Memorial Fund Prize in Economics and Commerce, UWA 1971; a Commonwealth of Australia Postgraduate Research award 1975; and the Gwilym Gibbon Prize Fellowship, Nuffield College 1979. His academic qualifications include B Econ UWA 1971, BA (Hons) Oxford 1974 in Philosophy, Politics and Economics, M Phil Murdoch 1977, D Phil Oxford 1983. He was a local councillor in Fremantle 1983–1986 and a political commentator for radio in the 1983 State and Commonwealth elections.⁴

Gallop entered Parliament as the member for inner city Victoria Park in a June 1986 by-election while Brian Burke was the Labor premier and ultimately became the twenty-seventh person to be premier of the State. Local academic Quentin Beresford⁵ has suggested that Burke opposed Gallop's pre-selection in 1986, preferring a party hack to avoid too much talent in the backbench—although it is doubtful that Gallop would have appreciated such a back-handed compliment even if he had been aware of it.

In July 2006, Gallop returned to academia as director of the Graduate School of Government at the University of Sydney. Since his resignation on 16 January 2006, the *Geoff Gallop Collection*⁶ has been established at Curtin University. It focuses on Gallop's years in the Western Australian Parliament and provides some insights into the man behind the politics. It describes his transformation from country lad to Rhodes Scholar, from Liberal to Labor affiliation, and from local councillor to backbencher to premier. Perspectives from a range of political commentators,

academics and politicians in the *Collection* repeatedly use words like integrity, intelligent and committed and acknowledge his legacy in rebuilding the reputation of the Labor party. Even journalist Paul Murray who believed Gallop should have achieved much more in a time of economic prosperity, thought that his government ‘was far superior to the one that survived him’. The extensive papers in the collection also demonstrate Gallop’s longstanding interest in and knowledge of Labor history in Western Australia and nationally. Harry Phillips and David Black have both contributed to our understanding of Gallop, particularly as a politician, and much of their work is accessible through the *Collection*.⁷

Gallop is a descendent of a pioneering family. James Gallop, his great great grandfather, arrived in Western Australia in 1829 with the first group of European settlers and this heritage appears to have been influential in his interest in local history. Throughout his early political career, Gallop compiled short histories of the suburbs in his electorate and long-term residents will recall his articles in the local community newspapers. His father Douglas John Gallop and his mother Eunice (nee Grigsby) had three children. Gallop was the middle child, with an elder brother and younger sister. He attended the local government schools—Beachlands Primary School and Geraldton Senior High School, graduating in 1968—where he displayed outstanding academic skills and was a keen sportsman, debater and actor. From his days as a young teacher, Jeff Carr, who Gallop succeeded in the Lawrence Labor Ministry in 1990, recalls Gallop as a ‘young, slightly built and very earnest leg spinner’ as well as an organised captain in the Geraldton under sixteen cricket competition.⁸ A high school essay that can be found in the *Geoff Gallop Collection* arguing that Australia should become a republic showed an early awareness not only of the Westminster system but of the American presidential system. His view that ‘only men over thirty-five should be able to attempt to gain the post’ of president is a reflection of the times. Gallop

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became a strong supporter of the promotion of women and his concerns about the ‘brashness and arrogance of several young politicians’ expressed in this essay, may well have come to haunt him during the heady days of power in the 1980s. After all, Burke turned thirty-six the day he became premier in 1983. Gallop maintained his support for a republic and attended the 1999 Constitutional Convention arguing for a republic with a directly elected president. In 2008 he was back at Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’s 2020 Summit debating the future of Australian governance.

After a short stint in the Liberal Party, Gallop joined the Labor Party in 1971 at the instigation of Labor stalwart Bob McMullan when Gough Whitlam’s *It’s Time* campaign galvanised many of his generation. Having turned twenty-one in September 1972, Gallop was just old enough to vote in the December election. The results brought Labor back into power in the Commonwealth government for the first time since Sir Robert Menzies defeated Ben Chifley in 1949.⁹ Like many of his contemporaries, Gallop was concerned about the Vietnam War and was lucky his number did not come up in the national conscription ballot. The national ballot on 17 September 1971 which included men who were born in the period 1 July 1951 to 31 December 1951 drew 28 September but not 27 September.

Gallop married his wife Bev (nee Beverley Diane Jones) on 1 March 1975 and their sons Tom and Leo were born in 1979 and 1981 respectively. Bev completed a Bachelor of Arts and a Diploma of Education at the University of Western Australia at the same time as Gallop was studying. She was recognised nationally and internationally for her ceramic art and teaching, winning many awards and exhibiting throughout Australia, in the US and in New Zealand. She went back to study after Gallop’s retirement and completed a Master of Studio Art at Sydney University. Sadly, Bev died on 4 March 2009 from lung cancer. In a tribute to her on 12 March 2009, former federal

Labor leader, Kim Beazley spoke of her creative complexity and said:¹⁰

You would not know it from her conversation, but she was a brilliant, original and prizewinning ceramist. Her love of art and her skill were topics of conversation but not to advance herself in others' estimation, simply because it gave her joy. For her, the honours and exhibitions were part of the passing parade. Her longstanding teaching activities were given only the occasional mention.

Bev was a Fellow of the Craft Council of WA. She was involved in 26 exhibitions across the country and overseas. She won nine prizes, including the Sidney Myer International Ceramics Award in 1997.

No person in political leadership could wish for a more stoic, determined, intelligent, affectionate, fighting backstop than former premier Geoff Gallop enjoyed in Bev.

Bev maintained a low public profile but was active in the Victoria Park electorate. Many of her art students did not even know she was the premier's wife. Behind the scenes Bev was an avid follower of politics and maintained a close and active interest in the performance of Gallop, his Cabinet and his party colleagues—it was well known that any radio interview would be analysed and reported back to Gallop by Bev at the end of every day. According to Gallop's former chief of staff, Sean Walsh, Bev was well able to contribute ideas and comment knowledgeably on issues of the time. Her support for Gallop both personally and professionally cannot be overestimated. Both her intellect and her emotional support helped shape the way in which Gallop was able to lead and remain in touch with the concerns and aspirations of ordinary Western Australians. Tributes which flowed in March 2009, including a condolence motion in Parliament, described a warm and generous woman



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who made a significant contribution to the Labor party and the community, who was respected by both sides of politics and who handled her role in a most dignified manner. Despite her many talents and interests, however, Bev's primary concern was to protect her family's happiness. When we met to discuss some of the background to this book in 2007, there was no doubt that Bev was making a judgement on how her husband would be reflected in the final product.



Gallop's longstanding friendship with Tony Blair began in their days at Oxford together where they formed a theatrical group, the quite successful St John's Mammias, performing skits they had written themselves. This together with early experience back in Perth as a radio commentator was excellent training for the performance required of a premier in an age where media presence has become so important to political success. Gallop's maiden speech in 1986 identified a need for balance between the political, social and economic factors and indicated an appreciation for the need for a 'whole of state' view. He said, 'The State Parliament is the only body capable of considering the interests of the State as a whole, the only body capable of taking into account the interests of all people' (Legislative Assembly, 18 June 1986, page 438).

Throughout Gallop's time in Parliament, he continued to publish his views on public administration and report to his local constituents. His 'Electorate Report' in 1987 outlined the major achievements of the Labor government and his personal forays including a trip to West Germany, Sweden, Norway and Great Britain investigating productivity and training and a submission to the Constitutional Commission's Advisory Committee on Individual and Democratic Rights on the need to embody the one vote-one value principle in our Constitution. As a local member, Gallop was assiduous in distributing copies of government policy statements and meeting his constituents in a street-a-week door-knocking program. Early in his term he commented positively on Brian Burke's determination to cut

through red tape and get things done, perhaps in retrospect with too much enthusiasm although at the time Gallop was among the defenders of this approach to commercial operations.¹¹ In subsequent publications Gallop challenged the use of the Gross Domestic Product and other traditional tools of economists as measures of progress, preferring measures that took into account social and environmental objectives as well.¹²

Gallop's maiden speech also highlighted his commitment to Aboriginal people when he quoted one of his ancestors writing to his son who had settled in Western Australia in 1829—'remember that you are intruders in their country'. A more coordinated approach to some of the complex issues in indigenous affairs (the Gordon Inquiry) was one of his priorities as premier. His concern for Aboriginal people may also have been influenced by his time in Cabinet in the 1990s during the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and the introduction of what were seen by many as draconian laws that led to the imprisonment of many young Aboriginal people for what many would consider minor offences. This is well described in publications like Quentin Beresford's study of the life of activist Rob Riley.¹³ Cabinet solidarity would have required Gallop to support the legislation.

Gallop's long-term commitment to politics and public administration resulted in the award as a National Fellow of the Australian Institute of Public Administration in 2003. This award is the highest national award bestowed in recognition of an individual's outstanding contribution to the study or practice of public administration, as well as to the Institute. Gallop is the only political leader in Australia to receive such an award. This adds to the significance of understanding his approach to public sector reform.

Since leaving politics, Gallop has actively pursued his academic career. In an interview with Maxine McKew in September 2006, Gallop recalled that he had always wanted to be a teacher at some level and had a deep appreciation for the



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opportunities that a high-quality school system could provide. His parents were very keen to see that he had a good education. They believed strongly in local government schools, and so Gallop went to government schools, as did his own sons. In this interview he also revealed the ‘liberation’ that comes with leaving a political life behind, saying, ‘If you’ve got your own values and your own view, sometimes, you know, you literally have to compromise your principles with others in order to keep the whole ship of state afloat in a way that allows people to get on with their lives.’ As a conscientious politician he had attended events three or four nights a week for fifteen years and now with a new life in a new city he could appreciate the opportunity to reflect on priorities and get a better balance with work, leisure and family—less compromise. He has increasingly spoken about his interest in spirituality, meditation and Buddhism, which stems from an intellectual interest more so than any personal religious beliefs.



On 9 June 2008 Gallop was awarded a Companion in the Order of Australia (AC) for his distinguished service to the parliament of Western Australia, to the promotion of economic development and environmental sustainability and to the community through educational, health and social reform. He was also appointed to the board of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission the same year. Other awards and achievements include the Commonwealth of Australia Centenary Medal in 2001 and Life Membership of the Association for the Blind (Western Australia). On 4 April 2006 he was admitted to the Honorary degree of Doctor of Letters by Murdoch University. He has been a Board member of the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership since 2006.

In a discussion with me about the ‘Gallop legacy’, his successor to the Victoria Park electorate, Ben Wyatt MLA, acknowledged that it took most of his first three years to emerge as the local member in his own right rather than being a ‘new Geoff’. This has meant that both he and his wife had to forge their own



mark—neither of them can, nor are they now expected to be, involved in all the same local activities as the Gallop team. In some respects, however, Wyatt has clearly modelled himself on Gallop. Like Gallop, Wyatt is spending some of his time in opposition writing and floating ideas. This is a luxury that government ministers do not have. He is impatient about the lack of substantive debate in Parliament. He continues to distribute Gallop's local histories to new residents. One of the problems that Wyatt sees both he and Gallop have encountered is that they have a reputation as 'policy wonks' and this has clashed with the pragmatics of day-to-day politics and the expectation of traditional Labor party members. However, according to Wyatt, there is no doubt that Gallop gave the party credibility beyond its traditional base and this has been instrumental in paving the way for more Labor candidates from a new mold.

Wyatt sees that Gallop's conservatism has left a good legacy on economic management. Because Gallop was very focused on repairing the economic credentials of the Labor party, he concentrated on getting the budget processes right. 'Together he and Ripper helped to break the shadow of poor economic management and restored as much as you possibly could, the economic credentials of the Labor Party,' Wyatt said.

Gallop's reform agenda

The pace of reform in the first year of Gallop's government was impressive. In response to a question in the Legislative Assembly on 18 June 2002, he identified twelve inquiries, taskforces, committees, summits and reviews that were being overseen by his department alone. In total, approximately 150 are listed in Hansard ranging from operational to strategic reviews and inquiries.

Many of the issues required a coordinated approach across several portfolios and departments. Systemic reforms related

to the administration of Cabinet, including the appointment of a public servant as Cabinet secretary rather than a politician, and machinery of government reforms which resulted in halving the number of departments. He established a Strategic Management Council where he met regularly with directors general and instituted the first state strategic plan. In addition to the systemic coordination mechanisms, Gallop also led a wide range of policy initiatives. Three high profile issues for which he will be remembered are: the government's determination to end logging in old growth forests; its approach to water policy and planning; and its response to a crisis in an Aboriginal community (the Gordon Inquiry).

Saving Old Growth Forests

Early twentieth century efforts to protect WA's native forests culminated in the 1918 *Forests Act*. In what was to be a close parallel to the issues faced by Gallop, both sides of Parliament accepted the need to 'cease the awful destruction wrought in maiden bush by hewers', but the Labor opposition expressed concern at the plight of workers whose livelihoods would be destroyed by the legislation.¹⁴ WA's old growth forests now lie mainly in the south-west and 44 per cent are privately owned. In 1999, a Commonwealth–state regional forest agreement for the future of the forests for the coming 20 years was signed. This agreement was accepted by timber groups but led to a backlash from traditional conservation groups.

Old growth forest policy has evolved over several decades.¹⁵ The policy community that had traditionally input to the Regional Forest Agreement in WA was relatively closed comprising state and commonwealth government departments and representatives of the timber industry. However, in the lead up to the 2001 election, an issues network comprising actors who were excluded from the policy process, and with competing

objectives, emerged. This network included some high profile individuals from Perth and rural towns and local government. Those from Perth were generally strongly opposed to logging but the residents in rural towns and local government included those who were pro-logging as well as others who opposed to it. As in 1918, their communities and livelihoods were at stake.

The debate over the future of the forest industry and the towns dependent on it was played out in public meetings and in the press, challenging traditional values and providing the opportunity for those not closely involved to better understand the debate and the implications of the different approaches of the major political parties. A new political group, Liberals for Forests, was launched in mid-1999 and the Opposition, led by Gallop, went to the 2001 election with a commitment to end logging in old growth forests and support the transition to new businesses for people affected. Gallop needed to stand up to the powerful Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union to get this policy endorsed.

Following the election, with the policy position developed, a relatively simple structure was established to implement the policy. It comprised a Cabinet committee, the Protection of Old Growth Forests Policy Ministerial Committee, with four ministers supported by a dedicated implementation office. This was widely considered as one of Gallop's most successful Cabinet committees. Even though it was reportedly 'painful at times, it had good staff. It worked'.¹⁶ It was also perceived to have the backing of full Cabinet even though Gallop was not a member. A coordination committee of relevant chief executive officers had an advisory role. Separate roles of each minister and their respective agencies were able to be clearly described even though they were interrelated. Two key programs, the Business Exit Assistance and the Workers Assistance Program, were funded and assigned to departments where similar initiatives were part of their core business.

The Auditor General found some evidence of drift in the implementation of the two major funding programs for the Old Growth Forest policy.¹⁷ However, he noted that the changes to the Workers Assistance Package ‘better address the needs of applicants’ and payments to businesses that did not comply with the written guidelines ‘were in the spirit of the policy’.

On 6 November 2001, Gallop was able to tell the Legislative Assembly that ‘(t)he entire 346,000 hectares of old-growth forest will go into reserves’. However, helping the timber communities through the transition was more challenging although it had faded from the media as an election issue by 2005. By that time, over 100 businesses and 700 workers (the vast majority) had received assistance from the government’s \$161 million package to leave the native forest timber industry. This was an increase from the initial budget estimate of \$120 million to ensure that the government’s objectives could be met.

Taking charge of the Water Problem

Since colonisation, access to water has been critical to the development of industry and communities across Australia. Every primary school student in WA has learnt about C.Y. O’Connor who built the water pipeline from Perth to the Goldfields in the last years of the nineteenth century. Salinity was identified with land clearing as problematic at the turn of the twentieth century with scientific evidence available to government from the mid-1920s. However, it was not until 1988 that there was any major expression of political interest.¹⁸ Inaction was attributed to a lack of awareness among farmers and other factors but, in particular, to a lack of political leadership. At the national level, water resources have been the subject of interstate negotiations and agreements since federation but one from which WA has been largely removed until the last decade or so.

Water was one of the major problem areas confronting WA in 2001 but did not feature as an issue at the election. The government knew there was a 'water problem' but did not have clear solutions. The premier's chief policy advisor described the situation in 2001 in the following terms.¹⁹ There was a fractured and fragmented response and a particular lack of cooperation between the water resource managers (the Water and Rivers Commission; the Department of Environment and the Office of Water Regulation); the supplier (the corporatised Water Corporation) and other departments. The resource managers were responsible to the Minister for Environment and the supplier to the Minister for Business Enterprises. The Department of Treasury and Finance had a stake in regard to National Competition Policy. The Department of Agriculture focused on the interests of irrigators and farmers, the environmentalists were concerned particularly for the physical environment; Health had issues with water quality and the Department of Industry and Resources championed the needs of the mining industry, a major water user.

Following the 2001 election, a State Water Taskforce chaired by Gallop's chief policy advisor was established to bring unity and cohesion. A series of water forums was conducted throughout the state in 2002 culminating in a Water Symposium at Parliament House in October 2002. The State Water Strategy was released in 2003, developed by a policy unit in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. This led to a Water Summit later that year which looked at the demand side of the question—it considered conservation strategies such as water restrictions. In 2004 more work was done on the supply side, an irrigation review gave rise to many complex projects such as legislative reform, reviews of practices, licensing and metering. It also recommended a new Department of Water at the same time as the Government was trying to reduce the number of agencies through its machinery of government reforms. This department finally came into existence in November 2005. A

Cabinet Standing Committee on Water Resources comprising six senior ministers and chaired by Gallop was formed in 2004.

Gallop went to the 2005 election with a commitment to solve the water crisis with a leadership argument and took on the water portfolio himself. This contrasted with the opposition's specific proposal to bring water by canal some 3,700 km from the Kimberley.

By May 2006, the government was claiming national leadership in water planning and that Labor had positioned WA to be the national leader on water resource management and placed the State on a secure footing with continued careful management. WA led the way, for instance, in the use of desalination plants to supplement water supplies, a strategy increasingly being adopted by other states.

Crisis in an Aboriginal community—the Gordon Inquiry

Concern for Aboriginal people had been ongoing for Gallop long before he became premier. It was an issue he raised in his maiden speech in 1986. He established the Gordon Inquiry in January 2002 to inquire into violence and child abuse in Aboriginal communities. It came to a head following a coronial inquiry in November 2001 into the death of a 15 year old Aboriginal girl, Susan Taylor, two years earlier at the Swan Valley Nyungah community in Perth.

The Taskforce was chaired by Aboriginal magistrate, Sue Gordon. The Inquiry undertook comprehensive consultation with community groups and individuals around the state, with government agencies and with Aboriginal groups and presented the government with a report containing 197 recommendations.²⁰ The government's 97 page response contained 120 initiatives to be implemented by fifteen agencies across the public sector with \$66.5 million in additional funding provided. Funded initiatives ranged from discrete projects such as the

erection of new multi-function facilities in remote policing, to the appointment of additional staff for existing child protection programs, to cultural change programs. In a review of the process, Gordon commented on the complexity of bringing together views in an area where even the definitions of such terms as 'family violence', 'child sexual abuse', and 'child abuse' differed between the government agencies, communities and individuals. In her view most public servants 'were generous with their time' and had great expectations of the review that brought together information, analysis and research from a wide spectrum.²¹

A secretariat was established which reported to a senior officers' group, through to a Human Services Directors General Group (with twelve members) and on to the Cabinet Standing Committee on Social Policy (with eight members). Only the secretariat was dedicated to the implementation of the Gordon Inquiry, the other forums having wider mandates to address a range of interagency matters. It also overlapped with commonwealth reforms to the provision of services to Aboriginal communities.

Gallop's office took the leadership role in getting the Inquiry underway and he and the head of his department were closely involved in the establishment of the inquiry and in the development of the government's response. The lead role transferred to the Minister for Indigenous Affairs and the head of Gallop's department gradually moved away from direct involvement. The secretariat was originally established in the premier's department in 2002 but moved to the Department of Indigenous Affairs in 2005.

A subsequent decision by Gallop to close the Swan Valley community where the specific incident which pre-empted this inquiry took place was described to me by one public servant as 'politically courageous, viewed by some as draconian, but necessary', but it did have the effect of signalling a very clear commitment to improving the wellbeing of Aboriginal women

and children. Sadly, there were those within the public sector who thought the problem was ‘too hard’ and it was only when directors general could not assure Gallop that children were safe that he and staff in his office moved to close the camp. Subsequently, camp ‘patriarch’, Aboriginal activist Robert Bropho was jailed for three years for child sex abuse. In 2009, this sentenced was doubled to six years on appeal by the State. The incident for which he was sentenced related to having sex with a girl under the age of 13 in 1990 and 1991—more than ten years before Gallop intervened.

The Auditor General conducted a review of the implementation of the Gordon Inquiry recommendations in 2005 and concluded that ‘(i)mplementation ... has been significantly delayed highlighting a need to assess the effectiveness of collaboration between agencies to ensure key initiatives are progressed in a timely manner’.²² He found a lack of monitoring and insufficient clarity of roles and responsibilities. People interviewed in this research also noted that agencies ‘waiting on action in relation to the overall evaluation of the Gordon initiatives, focused on the evaluation of their own projects’ and that ‘the spirit of Gordon was lost when it went back into the system’. Some agencies were reported to be focusing on outcomes that reflected their core business rather than the more complex collaborative outcomes that tried to build the capacity of Aboriginal communities.

Subsequent events in north-west Aboriginal communities have shown that there remains an ambivalence on the part of the public sector to deal with complex situations even when children are clearly living in most unsatisfactory conditions.

Old Growth Forests, Water and the Gordon Inquiry provide interesting opportunities to reflect on Gallop’s approaches as well as his achievements for a number of reasons. Each of them

involved several members of Cabinet, the approach in each was quite different and they were considered important and to have had varying degrees of success.

The various issues caught Gallop's attention in different ways. Both water and logging in old growth forests were identified as problems before the 2001 election with the old growth forest debate politicised to the extent that a breakaway group from the Liberal Party fielded candidates at the election. The debate was polarised, with one group calling for an end to logging and another taking a more conservative line to protect business and communities dependent on the logging industry. Water on the other hand was a concern, as it was nationally, about needing to balance the competing interests of the environment, industry and the community with no clear solutions. The third issue, the Gordon Inquiry, arose in response to a damning report by the coroner about the death of a young girl in an Aboriginal community.

Gallop's response to old growth forests was determined while in opposition and was seen to be crucial in winning the election, he knew 'something had to be done' about water but did not have a solution and, in the third example, the issue thrust itself on the agenda in response to a crisis—and it is not uncommon for premiers to bring crisis management into their own department as Gallop did in this instance.

At the same time as substantive policy and administrative reforms were being initiated, a glance at Gallop's media releases reveals the diversity of issues that might distract a new premier.²³ By the end of June 2001, Gallop had issued sixty-five media releases. They ranged from meeting election commitments including the overhaul of the public sector; to grants for football and small business; to appointments; to caps on fuel prices; and a commitment to having government agencies pay their accounts within thirty days. He opened a new visitors' centre in the Karijini National Park in the north-west of the

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state on 22 June and was off to China and Singapore for a ten-day visit on 27 June. It is little wonder that leaders can look tired.