



Labor minister was to blame

Margaret Quirk should hang her head in shame for trying to shift the blame (*Countryman* P14 20/5/10) for a regional police communications network which was allowed to run down under her Labor government.

Margaret Quirk was a minister when police officers between Geraldton and Dongara had to ask passing truckies to radio for help for accident victims. She was a minister when police had to leave the scene of an incident to make radio contact from the nearest high ground.

Where was Margaret Quirk's concern between February and June, 2008, when I lobbied the then Labor government four times in parliament for a commitment to upgrading country police radio systems?

In comparison, the Barnett Government started improving the system in its first budget.

In the 2009/10 budget, \$20.1 million was allocated to extend existing radio and mobile data communications north to Lancelin, east to Northam and south to Dunsbor-

ough. An additional \$1 million was allocated to planning for extensions outside that area.

The Barnett Government's budget has also provided funds for a new radio system linking the Geraldton, Carnarvon and Meekatharra police stations which, according to the District Superintendent, had been operating on a mixture of mobile phones, HF radio and silence.

The new system cost only \$80,000 and removed the need to have someone sitting in the Carnarvon and Meekatharra stations just to maintain communications.

The Barnett Government also provided \$120,000 to install computers in four police cars in the district so that officers could have immediate access to the details of anyone they detained.

Shame, Margaret Quirk, shame, for having the the cheek to criticise a system that was broken under your watch and which your government never took the trouble to fix, despite the fact that you were rolling in sur-

pluses.

Will you now have the cheek to try and claim the credit for the \$80.3 million over three years the Barnett Government has provided in the current budget to upgrade the regional communications systems for regional police and emergency services, and the additional millions to expand mobile phone coverage on country highways?

Brian Ellis
Agricultural Region MLC



Margaret Quirk.