

# Xmas party blowout

**JOE SPAGNOLO**

TAXPAYERS footed a bill of almost a quarter of a million dollars on Christmas functions for government departments – with board members and executives dining at some of the state's finest restaurants.

In some cases, executives and members of State Government boards enjoyed \$150-a-head Christmas lunches at swanky venues, Premier Colin Barnett and ministers admitted following questions by the opposition. Figures showed a total of \$240,000 was spent on Christmas functions in 2014, ranging from restaurant dinners to larger scale functions that included staff.

One of the big spenders, government-owned Gold Corporation forked out \$34,463 on a party at the Perth Mint, then spent another \$2102 for 14 board of directors and executive committee members to have a Christmas show at the Perugino Restaurant.

The state opposition yester-

day questioned the spend-ups, particularly at a time when West Australians were being told to brace for a tough budget and more increases in power and water charges.

"Everyone's entitled to enjoy themselves at Christmas, but this level goes too far," Labor accountability spokeswoman Rita Saffioti said.

"Extremes in largess under the Barnett Government are an insult to long suffering WA taxpayers who continue to be hit with ever increasing household charges. It is difficult to justify this level of expenditure while there are cuts of funding to our schools.

"This is just another sign that this Liberal-National government has lost its way.

"It appears if you are in Colin's Club anything goes."

Treasurer Mike Nahan said yesterday: "The Government expects all agencies to exercise restraint on spending on Christmas parties given the current financial climate. I am glad the agencies within my portfolio have heeded my call."