

**McGOWAN GOVERNMENT — REGIONAL WESTERN AUSTRALIA —  
ELECTION COMMITMENTS**

*Motion*

**HON DR SALLY TALBOT (South West)** [11.27 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house notes the government is delivering its plans for the regions as promised at the 2017 state election.

I took a great deal of notice of the comments made by Hon Diane Evers in the preceding debate. I am sorry she has had to leave the chamber on urgent parliamentary business. Hon Diane Evers speaks a lot of sense when she comes into this place. She is very measured and she makes a thorough assessment of what is happening in her electorate. Honourable members will have heard me say this many times before: I have always maintained that if we took the six members for the South West Region—I venture to say that this is true of all six regions in the state—and put us all together, there would be very few things that we disagreed on about the priorities of the people who live in our electorates, the people who vote for us. Where we differ is in the way we deliver on those expectations. I am very proud to be part of the McGowan Labor team that went to the 2017 election with a clear plan for jobs and with clear commitments to the regions to grow regional economies and to diversify local economies. Those are the two key words. Unfortunately, both of those key words were missing from those long eight and a half years of Liberal–National government. We are growing the economy of the regions and diversifying the economy of the regions. We went to the 2017 election making very clear commitments, which are listed in documents that are available to anybody who wants to ask me for a copy. The test of any government in the four years after it wins an election is to show how those commitments are being delivered to the electorate. Again I will say that in 2020, 13 months out from the next election, as various members in the chamber have noted, I am still very proud to be part of the McGowan Labor team that is delivering on all those commitments. I am sorry that there seems to be some confusion on the part of the Liberal opposition about exactly how those commitments are being delivered. I suggest that members opposite stop reading their own propaganda and start reading the media—both statewide and local media. I suggest that they get out there and start listening to their constituents, visiting their community groups and looking at where the money is being spent by the McGowan Labor government in the regions to honour those two fundamental commitments that we made to regional Western Australia—to grow the economy and to diversify the economy.

Hon Diane Evers made a very particular point that I have heard her make before about the lack of truth-telling in politics. She was deploring our failure to be honest when we give an account of what we are doing. I understand where her pain comes from, but I do not share that view across the board. I think the electorate fundamentally judges us on our honesty. As has been remarked by many politicians on both sides of the political fence, we face the ultimate test every three or four years. We have to go back to the electorate and ask it for its view. We essentially do a reapplication for our jobs every four years in the state Parliament and every three years at the federal level. That is how we are judged. That is how the community judges our truth-telling. Once again, I want to say that I am proud to be part of the team that is delivering on the commitments that we made to the electorate on our plan for jobs and our plan to grow and diversify local economies when we went to the election in 2017.

I have a very long list of things to go through. As other upper house members for the South West Region do, I look after eight lower house electorates and the list of commitments across those eight electorates is vast. I will not have time today to go through all the commitments that we have delivered on. However, I want to break those commitments down into three fundamental areas. We are delivering on our promise to create local jobs. A key part of the delivery of local jobs is to ensure that we deliver with local content. That is not just an empty slogan. It does not just appear on our bumper stickers. I will give members a specific example of local content from just a week or so ago. One of the things that pleases me about being a member for the South West Region as part of the McGowan Labor team is that I am able to go out and talk to community groups about their successful applications for funding. Recently, I was able to tell the Denmark Life Saving Club that it had successfully been granted \$625 000 towards its new clubrooms. That is unmitigated good news for that group. It is not the end of the road for it, because I also had to call upon the Liberal–National coalition government in Canberra to stump up its share. I hope that the fact that the McGowan government has committed to that project helps our federal colleagues make up their minds. I hope they will not take too long to do it. I was able to tell the club that it got the \$625 000 guaranteed from the Labor government. This is a very important community facility in the great southern. It attracts not only people who surf life save; it is a community hub. All sorts of activities are run out of that magnificent set-up at Ocean Beach. As part of the announcement of that \$625 000, I was able to also say that the state government will be looking for local contractors to fulfil those contracts. That is something that we could never say during the eight and a half long years of Liberal–National government because it did not care about that stuff. I will tell members how things have changed for me over the last three years. In the previous eight and a half years, I found that a lot of grant recipients in the south west were frankly pretty puzzled and perplexed. CEOs, principals of schools and people who were responsible for funding applications would turn up at work and find that they had just been given a vast envelope

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of money by the state government. They were not sure what it was for. There were very tight time lines for delivery. They were frankly puzzled. In those eight and a half years of Liberal–National government —

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Order, members!

**Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT:** I know this upsets some people on the opposition benches. I know they are very touchy about this. I have referred to this before and I will continue to tell this story. People were frankly puzzled about the way that that money was being doled out. Despite the fact that the Premier was in Perth telling his sports minister to watch out because the state was running out of money, we still saw vast amounts of money being pumped into regional Western Australia, which was puzzling people about how it was supposed to be spent. How that has changed! Every cent of funding that goes into regions, from both royalties for regions and different funds run by departments, is now tied to local contracting and local jobs. That is a significant turnaround in the emphasis on how money is spent in regional Western Australia. We are beginning to see the benefits. Every single project that I could mention from the eight electorates in the south west is tied to job creation. Every single dollar is tied to the number of jobs it will create. We do that by ensuring local content, which is now a key part of all those infrastructure and resource projects throughout the south west and, indeed, state wide. We are delivering on our promise to create local jobs.

When it comes to the delivery of health care, for the first time in a decade we are putting patients first. We are not looking at what suits bureaucrats in Perth. We are looking at on-the-ground delivery of health services. It can be seen anywhere in the south west. If members were to pick a region, I could show them in a microcosm how that is playing out in reality.

The third thing we are doing is investing in local schools and TAFE. I take my hat off to Hon Sue Ellery. She spends the greater part of her time visiting schools in both regional and metropolitan Western Australia and talking about what the Labor government is doing to give us first-class education facilities throughout our state. I had the honour earlier in the week to meet and spend some time with the person who is going to take over from Hon Mick Murray in the seat of Collie–Preston if all goes well at the election in March 2021. She is a local teacher. She came to Perth with one message for the Premier and Hon Sue Ellery. That message from her community in Collie was a thankyou for \$7.5 million that the Labor government, with Hon Sue Ellery as Minister for Education and Training, was putting into Collie Senior High School. Her message on behalf of her community to the Premier and to the Minister for Education and Training was a thankyou because regional high schools in Western Australia now have the twenty-first century facilities that every regional high school should expect. I remind members that having strung the Collie community along for three or four years during the long eight and a half years of Liberal–National government, the previous education minister, Hon Peter Collier, cancelled that project. Hon Sue Ellery reinstated that project and I know that she has visited Collie, along with the Premier, in the last few weeks to open those new facilities, which are absolutely world-class and exactly what Collie deserves.

That was all done under the heading of growing and diversifying local economies. In the few minutes remaining, I will come back to the comment Hon Diane Evers made about the lack of truth-telling in this place. I am sorry in a sense that the Acting President (Hon Dr Steve Thomas) has taken the chair, because I wanted to issue to him a direct challenge involving his role as a member for the South West Region. Anything I say is not supposed to impugn on the member's chairing, which is absolutely impeccable. I can assure Hon Diane Evers that a considerable amount of truth-telling goes on. When I stand and say that the McGowan Labor government is doing a good job in Collie, I am joined by my colleague Hon Dr Steve Thomas who also stands outside this place and says that the Labor government is doing a good job in Collie. When I read that in the local media last month, honestly, I felt good. I felt as good as Hon Diane Evers would feel if she thought we were telling the truth more often. I read the article and thought that it was proof of my theory that we are actually all on the same page. I want to say to my colleague Hon Dr Steve Thomas, as a member for the South West Region, that he cannot say one thing to the community and then say something else in this place. That does not work. Part of our problem is members coming here and saying one thing to keep the party room happy and going out there and saying something else because they know it is the truth and they know what is happening in the community.

When asked by local media about a motion moved in the other place by his leader having a go at the McGowan Labor government, Hon Dr Steve Thomas said that he admired the economic diversification projects that the McGowan Labor government was implementing in Collie. This is a direct quote —

“What Alannah MacTiernan is trying to do in diversification for Collie is worthy of support and I think she and I agree the solution (for Collie) is not one easy answer but a larger number of smaller projects,”

...

“There is more to be done, of course, but I'm prepared to give her the time to deliver on that intent.

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“I’m happy to work with (the state government) to get good projects off the ground, but not every project is good.

“In the meantime we need to manage the economy and it’s impacts.”

I put my hand on my heart and say that I agree with him absolutely and completely. I think Hon Alannah MacTiernan is the best Minister for Regional Development in the last decade, far and above anybody that the Liberal–National Parties were able to offer us—far and above anything we have seen. I say thank God for Hon Alannah MacTiernan. I am very proud to be out in the electorate talking about the things we are delivering in regional development. We will see the Premier, Mark McGowan, joining the rest of his Labor team in the south west many times between now and the election because we will take to the state election another set of commitments that we will spend the following four years honouring if the electorate trusts us to do it. It is up to us to lay out our case for that over the next year, and that is what I will be very proudly doing as part of the Labor team in the south west.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Before I call Hon Martin Aldridge, I remind members that commenting from a position that is not your chair, even it is simply a, “Hear, hear!”, is unparliamentary.

**HON MARTIN ALDRIDGE (Agricultural)** [11.43 am]: Not too many regional Labor Party members are jumping to their feet to support the member’s motion during private members’ business.

**Hon Matthew Swinbourn:** We only want to hear from you!

**Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE:** Great! Give me an extension of time then.

Yesterday I was away on urgent parliamentary business doing something that it appears no cabinet minister can do, which is visit Moora, in my electorate. I was there with the Deputy Prime Minister touring what looks to be an amazing expansion of Moora Residential College, which is being funded by the federal Liberal–National government. When my office called and said notice had been given of this motion, I was nearly involved in a motor vehicle accident! I did not think anyone in the Labor Party could bring a motion of this calibre to the chamber today without smiling, but Hon Dr Sally Talbot seemed to get through her contribution without too much smiling, although I am not sure whether her colleagues will be able to follow with the same level of discipline.

It is interesting that the Labor Party has brought this motion on today in a week when the Minister for Regional Development is paired all week on urgent parliamentary business. Therefore, there will be no contribution from the minister, but we can rely on her able parliamentary secretary. I hope Hon Darren West gets preselected in the upcoming reshuffle of Labor in the upper house because he is the greatest gift to members on this side of the chamber. Obviously, this motion is very misguided. Perhaps that is because the member comes from the South West Region. I am not a member of the South West Region but I know that a number of Labor seats are transitioning in that region. Perhaps the government can still feel the faint pulse of regional development pumping through the veins of the south west. Perhaps that faint pulse can still be felt in the Mining and Pastoral Region where Labor has a few seats left that it is trying to sandbag. However, in the Agricultural Region there is no pulse and its regional development agenda is on life support.

Hon Dr Sally Talbot challenged members to access Labor’s regional development plans. She said to let her know if we could not access them and she would be only too happy to assist. There is a Labor plan for Albany, Bunbury, Collie, Peel, the Pilbara, the goldfields and Geraldton, but I cannot find a Labor plan for the Central Wheatbelt, Roe or Moore. Perhaps Hon Dr Sally Talbot can assist me in tabling, at a later stage of today’s sitting, Labor’s plans for those electorates, because, as far as I am aware, there are none and there never were. Geraldton was the Labor Party’s only focus in my electorate at the last election because the Labor Party thought it could win that seat. It came very close but its plan was not good enough. Where was Labor’s plan for Moore, Katanning, Northam or Cunderdin or even at a more local level? It was missing.

This motion has been carefully crafted by the mover to reflect on the government delivering its plans at the election. I represent an electorate from Kalbarri to Esperance and the Labor Party had a plan only for Geraldton. Obviously, delivering its plan to the rest of my electorate was easy because there was none. The Labor Party achieved its plan of delivering its election commitments on day one upon forming the McGowan Labor government, because there was none. Where was its plan for Geraldton that identified the closure of the Geraldton Sobering Up Centre? Where in the plan for Moore did it identify that it would close Moora Residential College or the camp schools or the agricultural trust funds? Where was that identified in its plans? What about when the Labor Party told voters it would keep utility prices pegged at the consumer price index? It did not deliver on that plan; it hiked them up. Maybe the government will deliver in the year before the next election what it intended to deliver at the last election when it rolls out its pre-election sweeteners.

The biggest lie that WA Labor took to the last election was the statement, “We will keep royalties for regions and we will make it better.” That is what it said, especially Hon Darren West. He is a prolific social media user,

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although he is now restricted to Facebook because he has been banned from Twitter. There could be some troll accounts, although I am not too sure because we have not pinned him down on that yet. Do members remember Mark McGowan's "200 Fresh Ideas for WA"? If members need a copy, I can table it. Fresh idea 157 was to support and maintain royalties for regions with a focus on jobs. That fresh idea has not been achieved. I read an article just before I stood to make this speech that said that figures released today show the unemployment rate in Western Australia has risen from 5.4 per cent to 5.8 per cent. So much for the government's economic diversification, Plan for Jobs and building the economy. Unemployment has risen in Western Australia.

I want to draw members' attention to and spend a bit of time on this issue. Hon Dr Sally Talbot made the assertion that Hon Alannah MacTiernan, as Minister for Regional Development—despite the fact that she represents the metropolitan area—is the best regional development minister this state has ever had. The 2018–19 annual report of the Western Australian Regional Development Trust outlines clearly that in that financial year, the Minister for Regional Development handed back to the consolidated account \$635.9 million of royalties for regions funding. At the same time, Hon Darren West was running around and saying, "We've got a financial crisis. We can't afford \$7.5 million for Moora Residential College. You're not important enough". Hon Dr Sally Talbot also said, "Our greatest achievement is \$7.5 million for Collie Senior High School." Where were Hon Darren West and Hon Laurie Graham when Moora needed its \$7.5 million? Where were they when the Geraldton Sobering Up Centre was closed by the Minister for Mental Health? That was a very proud achievement of this Labor government! It is the first government in Australian history post the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody to close a sobering-up centre.

Over the next four years, the Labor government will launder \$1.622 billion of royalties for regions money, largely through the Water Corporation, from which, at the same time, it will collect a dividend. The government is laundering royalties for regions money in Western Australia at the same time as it is telling people in regional areas that it cannot afford to do what they need and provide the services that they need in their communities. That is, of course, unless people live in a Labor electorate, or an electorate that Labor wants to win at the next election. That \$1.6 billion equates to \$400 million a year. However, it gets worse. In the final year of the out years, it will peak at \$480 million a year. In the last out year of the budget, half of royalties for regions money will be gone in money laundering.

The government says, "The Minister for Regional Development is the best Minister for Regional Development this state has ever had. We have retained our commitment to make royalties for regions better and stronger". That is a straight-out lie. It cannot be described as anything other than that. Why will the Minister for Education and Training not visit Moora? I wonder whether she will turn up for the ribbon cutting ceremony. That might be the only occasion on which she will visit Moora. I am happy to report, members, that last year, Moora Residential College went from 29 students to 37. I reckon that when that college reopens later this year, before long we will have an issue with having to expand that residential college. I hope we will encounter that problem in the near future. Keep in mind that the Labor Party intended to close that college and, in fact, defended the closure of that college. That is not to mention the 1 447 people every year in Geraldton who now cannot access the sobering-up centre.

**HON LAURIE GRAHAM (Agricultural)** [11.53 am]: I am pleased to support this motion from Hon Dr Sally Talbot. It is a good motion. As regional members, we should be very proud of the success of the McGowan Labor government in implementing most of its plans for regional Western Australia.

I would like to start with a comment about the Bunbury port versus Fremantle port scenario. I had not intended to raise that, but it was raised by Hon Dr Steve Thomas. Having chaired the committee that looked at the amalgamation of the three ports, it is very interesting that not one person came forward in support of the notion that Fremantle and Bunbury were competitive ports and should be involved. That is despite the fact that we extensively sought people who had that view to put that view forward so that it could be canvassed and understood and become part of the committee's terms of reference and report to the Minister for Ports. However, no-one came forward. Despite talk in the corridors about all the shortcomings of the existing amalgamation, no-one advocated that Fremantle and Bunbury ports should be formally joined in some way. I thought I would put that on the record, because it is obviously an issue going forward. I am sure that from the perspective of Bunbury port, regardless of whether it stays inside or outside, it will continue to attract trade out of Fremantle and to hold the regional trade, because obviously a lot of that is currently going to Fremantle and it will gradually work its way back to Bunbury. I think that issue is a red herring.

I acknowledge that there are no regional development plans for the Central Wheatbelt, Roe and Moore.

**Hon Alanna Clohesy:** Yes.

**Hon LAURIE GRAHAM:** I am not going to go off the record, but yes. I was very proud to be on the Labor ticket at the last election and be part of the Plan for Geraldton. I thought that was fantastic. The key part of that platform from the point of view of Geraldton residents was the \$45 million investment in health for stage 1 of the redevelopment of Geraldton Health Campus. As a member of the committee that looked at the plan that we put

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forward and finalised for that project in Geraldton, I found it very disappointing that no plans were available for the Geraldton regional hospital redevelopment and it was all based on a guesstimate. Therefore, it is no wonder that the estimates made at the time for allocations for that project and the actual requirement were very different. I am pleased that the detailed planning for that hospital is now underway, with \$73.3 million for the hospital upgrade and \$10.2 million for dedicated mental health facilities. That is a great project. It will deliver 110 local jobs when it is finished. Over 100 jobs will flow from that project. That is a great project for the Geraldton area. The most important thing, which has delayed the rolling out of that project, was our desire to break down that project so that local contractors could participate. It is great that the architect for the first stage is a local. That would not have happened if that hospital project had not been broken down. Therefore, although the project has been criticised in a number of quarters for delays, I am sure we will get a much better hospital as a result of getting the planning right, and getting greater local participation from contractors and subcontractors through providing the opportunities for them to bid for this project.

I now move to the decision to freeze TAFE fees. I was not in the chamber for the debate yesterday. The number of TAFE students has increased as a result of the government's decision to target areas in which there are skill shortages. It is great that the three TAFE colleges in the midwest and goldfields have experienced an increase in the number of students opting to take up those courses.

The government has completed the \$20 million upgrade of Champion Bay Senior High School, as it is known today. That school required a commitment for additional funding. I am pleased that despite the fact that that funding was not in the budget, funding has been provided to complete that upgrade to the required level. Funding has also been provided to Geraldton Primary School, Rangeway Primary School, Mount Tarcoola Primary School and Bluff Point Primary School for dedicated science laboratories. These were not in the Plan for Geraldton or the plans for anywhere else. Those projects have been rolled out not only in Geraldton, but also across the electorates of Central Wheatbelt, Roe and Moore. There has been a very large number of upgrades to the schools in that area. There has been a major funding blitz of \$1.7 million for Geraldton alone. That funding has gone all over regional Western Australia and has benefited local projects and local contractors.

Despite the fishing industry not being seen to be the most friendly, I suppose, with the McGowan Labor government, the government has provided \$3.4 million to assist the industry to build tanks so that the export of live lobsters can continue. It is unfortunate that that is currently in a suspended state, but I have no doubt it will come back bigger and better. Funding was provided for some very small local projects and although a number of them could be highlighted, probably the most successful one was the track at the Woorree Park BMX Club that received a modest contribution of \$20 000. This allowed a top local athlete to continue to participate in the sport at his local club in Geraldton. One of the problems with living in regional WA is that a large number of people need to travel to the metropolitan area. He was very much advantaged by that investment. The club now has top-class facilities and is hosting high-level events that would not have been possible without that modest upgrade.

An investment of \$30 000 was committed to the Geraldton's creative hub to support Geraldton creatives and youth services. This is a great investment and has seen much improvement in that area.

The Wonthella Bowling Club was not targeted in the Geraldton plan but it received a community sporting and recreation facilities fund grant of about \$66 000. Despite that being a little controversial within the club, I know that it has been well embraced today and will, hopefully, see the club generate sufficient revenue to allow it to progressively replace some of its other rinks to become a club that uses both grass and synthetic surfaces.

A very significant development in the last few weeks has been the signing of the Indigenous land use agreement. This resolves the state's native title compensation for 48 000 square kilometres. It has been fantastic to see that agreement finalised. Obviously, a number of agreements throughout the state need to be finalised, but it is great to get this one so quickly finalised and on terms that appear to be favourable to all parties.

The commitment to the Abrolhos Islands has been honoured and the government is well advanced in the planning for that \$10 million project, which is hopefully stage 1. I am sure the minister in front of me will be very supportive of stages 2 and 3 when we can prove that more facilities are needed and it can be managed in a sensitive way so there is not an undue impact on the island itself. Perhaps with the downturn in the lobster industry at the moment, fishermen might become more cooperative in having some tourism come back into the camp areas that they control. To date, they seem to have been reluctant to negotiate.

I would like to quickly mention the electorates of the members for Central Wheatbelt, Moore and Roe; I should have got to them earlier. There have been great advantages to those areas that were not spelt out in a plan such as the one for Geraldton. That is a small shortcoming on our behalf and something that we have to look at, as Hon Alanna Clohesy suggested. It has very much been my privilege to contribute today to this motion moved by Hon Dr Sally Talbot. I look forward to hearing the contributions of other members.

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**HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary)** [12.03 pm]: I would like to respond to this outstanding motion brought to us today by Hon Dr Sally Talbot. We have come to expect no less than outstanding motions from Hon Dr Sally Talbot. She is a fantastic representative of the south west. It is great to have her with us as a member of the largest team of regional members of Parliament in the Western Australian Labor Party. We have more regional MPs than any other party, including in this chamber. It is great to have her in our big team of regional MPs who are delivering for regional WA. This house notes that the government is delivering its plans for the regions as promised in the 2017 state election. The keywords are “as promised”. Finally, the people of Western Australia and regional Western Australia have a government that does what it says it will do. It makes a plan, delivers on the plan and delivers for the people. People can confidently go to the polls next year in the knowledge that a Labor government will deliver what it says it will deliver. That makes a refreshing change. The coalition promised to provide a hospital in Geraldton three times. No lines were drawn on a page; there was nothing. We had to start that project from scratch. We promised that project and the first works will start in the coming months. I am very proud that we have been able to get that project —

**Hon Martin Aldridge:** Really! Which month?

**Hon DARREN WEST:** It has been well publicised, member—do the research. The works will start in the coming months. We started that project from scratch. We did it because that is what we told the electorate we would do. We found the funds, works are underway and we are delivering an upgrade for the Geraldton Health Campus that will employ 100 extra staff. We are also delivering mental health services for Geraldton and the midwest with the step-up, step-down unit being built in Geraldton. Due to demand, that project has been brought forward a year. The coalition was absent in that space during its time in government. We are getting on with the job, members.

We went to the election with a plan. I concede that whilst in opposition we could not make a plan for every electorate in the state. We made plans for the areas of greatest neglect, including Geraldton. Geraldton spent eight years in the wilderness under a coalition government that delivered nothing for Geraldton. It had had a charmed run under the Gallop government with the Geraldton southern transport corridor and the initiatives of Hon Alannah MacTiernan as Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. The hospital was built in Geraldton under a Labor government and it will now be expanded under a Labor government. That makes the hospital scoreboard in Geraldton 3–0 to Labor. We have done a great job in Geraldton. We are investing heavily because it was neglected so much by the conservatives in government over those long Barnett years. The people of Geraldton responded to that. Overwhelmingly, the highest primary vote in Geraldton was delivered to the Labor candidate. Unfortunately, the crossbench and small parties got together and by way of backroom preference deals delivered a member who delivered virtually nothing for Geraldton. At the next election, we will go to the people of Geraldton again and ask them who they think has delivered the most for them. At the next election, we will go to the people of regional Western Australia and ask them who has delivered the most for them. We will wait to see what they do.

We have delivered a billion dollars’ worth of new projects in the regions with an emphasis on jobs. We are serious about this. Under the coalition, an electorate’s worth of people moved to the metropolitan area. We are now the most urbanised state in Australia. The previous government’s neglect of the regions was a contributing factor. It is all right to spend money on facilities, but when interstate and metropolitan companies are asked to build those facilities, is it any wonder there are no jobs in the regions? Only 16 per cent of royalties for regions tenders under the previous government were awarded to country businesses. That is disgraceful—16 per cent; less than 20 per cent! As Hon Laurie Graham so eloquently put it, we are addressing that by awarding big projects such as the Geraldton Health Campus in a manner that encourages local businesses to be a part of it. I can think of nothing better than having regional projects built by regional people. There will be a certain element of pride in those projects for generations knowing that they were built by locals. We are getting on with the job.

I now turn to regional health —

**Hon Martin Aldridge** interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Dr Steve Thomas):** Members, order! Let us calm it down a bit folks.

**Hon DARREN WEST:** We have a plan to fix the WA economy and we are getting on with that. Does anyone remember the massive debt and deficit left by the Barnett Liberal–National government? We had \$4 billion a year in deficits and debt was forecast to reach \$42 billion in the out years, up from \$3.8 billion when members opposite came into government. Does anyone remember that terrible economic management? It is now gone. We have a competent government managing the economy. We have a fantastic Treasurer doing a terrific job of getting us back into surplus. He is getting the WA economy out of recession and back on track and getting people back to work. We have a plan for jobs. We have created thousands of new jobs since we came into government, especially in the regions where they are most needed. We have local plans, especially in neglected areas, and we will have a plan for regional WA when we go to the poll. Is that not a distinct point of difference between the now opposition and

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crossbench and the government? We have a plan, we have solutions—no ideas, no solutions, nothing from that side. People will judge us on that.

Regional health and mental health are areas of great need, and we are investing heavily in those. We are putting education assistants and Aboriginal and Islander education officers back into classrooms, with \$200 million spent on much-needed maintenance in schools right across the state, including electorates that did not have a plan. This is not a sports rorts scenario at all; this is money going to the areas of greatest need, whether it be a coalition seat, a government seat or a marginal seat. It is based on need. I am very proud of that. We have spent record amounts on roads, with \$2 billion invested into roads. It is a good time to get roads built, and that is why we are getting on with the job of improving our country roads, partnering with the federal government to deliver major road projects that will serve us well for generations. People will look back and think, “That government was forward thinking when it built these roads.” We have a plan for ports. We are increasing trade in our ports. We have the best Minister for Ports in the business on the job. We have a big focus on tourism, especially in the regions. Kalbarri Skywalk is about to be opened and the Houtman Abrolhos National Park —

**Hon Martin Aldridge:** It has nothing to do with you.

**Hon DARREN WEST:** I think we might have built it, member. It is a small detail, but it reminds me a bit of a Monty Python line. We have built that.

Tourism numbers in Esperance are through the roof. Is that not fantastic for that iconic area? It is due to a lot of the tourism work done behind the scenes by the McGowan government.

In economic development, we are getting behind local businesses that can expand and employ local people. I was delighted to be with the minister last week and the week before to announce regional economic development grants to businesses that can now upscale, employ more people and get more people living in our regions where we need them.

We have ended the coalition-induced recession and our economy is on the up. The last movement of the credit rating was up. We have kept royalties for regions as a standalone fund. There is underspend in RforR from time to time, as there was under the previous government. There was RforR underspend under the previous government, including \$681 million in 2011–12. I do not have time to give members opposite a lecture in economics 101, because they are clueless about the economy, but money can ebb and flow from one financial year to the next for various reasons. It is as simple as that. We have strengthened the governance and accountability through that scheme, and, as the Langouant report found, the previous government’s gross financial mismanagement almost sent the state broke, and we fixed that. It now has strong governance and accountability to ensure its sustainability for years to come. We are spending more than 16 per cent in the regions, I can tell members that. The 2019–20 budget had \$4.2 billion in RforR over four years, which is over \$1 billion a year. The coalition never once spent \$1 billion in RforR. We are spending \$5.6 billion on regional infrastructure over four years and \$2 billion on regional roads. There is much good news for this government to espouse when it comes to the regions. We are a strong driver in the regions and our focus is on the regions. I will tell members another couple of reasons. We have the most regional members of any party and a strong voice in the party room.

**Hon Martin Aldridge:** Why aren’t they ministers then?

**Hon DARREN WEST:** I think the member will find that the member for Collie–Preston is a minister.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Robin Chapple):** Order, members! That is enough interjecting.

**Hon DARREN WEST:** Thank you, Mr Acting President.

We have a strong voice. Not only that, the Premier grew up in a regional community. It was in the eastern states, but he grew up in a regional town. The Treasurer grew up in a regional town. People within our organisation understand the needs of regional WA, and we do not have constant fights within our party like the coalition had for eight long years.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Order, members! Hon Darren West, will you resume your seat for a minute. There is a lot of very complicated interjecting, if that is the word I am going to use. I would like that to cease, to a large degree. I give the call to Hon Darren West to continue his remarks.

**Hon DARREN WEST:** Thank you, Mr Acting President.

I will end by saying that I am very proud of our achievements in the regions. I wholeheartedly support the fantastic motion brought to us by Hon Dr Sally Talbot.

Hon Dr Sally Talbot; Hon Martin Aldridge; Hon Laurie Graham; Hon Darren West; Hon Diane Evers; Hon Kyle McGinn

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**HON DIANE EVERS (South West)** [12.14 pm]: On this issue we talk about a plan for the regions. I recognise that when an opposition is looking to get into government, it comes up with some plans for the regions that may be based on some of the information that it gets and its members have gathered and sent to it, but I expect a bit more. Through these past three years—as we have seen and will see into the next year and possibly another term—I expect that these plans develop. As it is, a lot of the issues that came up in the past three years—such as Local Projects, Local Jobs—were funded through royalties for regions, which is capped at \$1 billion a year. That money was set aside to be used in the regions and that is what should have happened. As we know, not all of it was used. I understand from what Hon Darren West has just said that it can be carried forward, but as far as I understand it, the legislation says that it is capped at \$1 billion a year. Maybe there should be some changes to cap it at \$4 billion a term so that that money is used in the regions as it was intended. “As it was intended” does not mean using it to subsidise the country water scheme. That should never have gone in there. It should not count as part of that \$1 billion and I believe that more can be done to support the regions.

The Greens were successful in the regions in the south west in 2017 because regional residents know the importance and value of their environment and the need to address climate change. This is growing year by year. Knowledge is increasing amongst not only the farmers, but also the regional residents, because farmers more than anyone see the impacts of climate change. They are concerned and want something to happen. As it stands, we seem to have to choose between crops and the fossil fuel industry, because this government and the previous government keep supporting more burning of fossil fuel, leading to greater consequences from climate change. Farmers understand this and are rapidly taking up regenerative processes to try to rebuild their landscape, but if we do not switch and find a way to turn off the climate change impacts as they are happening, we may lose some of that food security in our agricultural and horticultural production.

Farmers, more than others, know the value of a thriving community. They depend on having that community around them to provide workers when they need them. The work might be seasonal, but they need that community around them. So often we see governments of both persuasions leading us down the path where our regional areas are becoming smaller and smaller as businesses choose to leave because they are not getting the services they need to stay there. We have to go back out and talk to those regional residents, because farmers and regional residents get on with it and get the job done. When something needs to happen, they go about doing it themselves rather than pushing and pressing to have that stuff given to them. But I expect more out of a Western Australian government. I expect more from the government to support those regional residents to achieve equity of services, equity in transport and equity in economic opportunities. I know that a government can do that if it can operate and go out and listen to the people in the regions to find out what they need. I expect some sort of new deal to come from this government, a green new deal, to build a clean economy and a caring society in the regional areas. We can do it; it can be done. New things are happening around the world that make it more and more easy for us to reduce our emissions and draw down the carbon that we already put up there. There is a big job ahead of us but, as it stands, I do not see that this government and opposition are in any shape to work together to make sure that we get a better future for all residents of WA, and future generations. That is what I am looking for.

I go back to the royalties for regions program. Late last year, I introduced a bill to take 10 per cent of royalties for regions funding—yes, it is \$100 million—and dedicate that to the environment, because when we put money into the environment, people on the ground do the work. Those community groups would then have the funding to address the issues that no government seems willing to address on its own, such as feral pests and what climate change is doing to our crop land and forests, to make the landscape more resilient. I think those natural resource management groups, Landcare groups and environmental groups have a connection to the people, because they have volunteers looking after animals that are going extinct or are addressing the big issues happening in their environment. If we can support regional residents to do that work, there is all that volunteer labour plus the people who are paid, so it will create resources that will be paid for locally because money is put back into the community. If we can just put \$100 million or 10 per cent of royalties for regions into the environment, we will end up with a much better place and a much stronger, safer environment, and that is what we need to look at.

I have also suggested that the government looks at a deliberative process for our forests, because our forests are a big part of our region and our ability to draw down carbon. We need to go out to the community and set up a place where community members can have some influence, through a facilitated, deliberative process, to work out what we expect to use those forests for over the next 30 or 50 years, because that is what we need to be looking at. What we do not need to be doing is continually logging the trees, turning them into woodchips, selling them overseas and not getting any value for the communities that they come from. The first step in that would be to repeal the Forest Products Act and get rid of the Forest Products Commission. The Forest Products Commission has got to go. There is no profit left in logging the forest. We have to get to that point so we can start addressing the effects of climate change.



Hon Dr Sally Talbot; Hon Martin Aldridge; Hon Laurie Graham; Hon Darren West; Hon Diane Evers; Hon Kyle McGinn

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I recognise that Hon Dr Sally Talbot mentioned how I asked for truth in this Parliament. I do ask for truth but I do not expect to get it, because it just is not designed that way. I was saying that if half-truths are given part way through a project, there are always ways to pick holes in it; there are always ways to undermine it. That is the problem we have in this place. When a party is in opposition, it continually tries to undermine the government, to nobody's benefit other than that of the opposition party, because then it might be able to get into power again. That does not benefit our communities, it does not benefit our regional areas and it does not benefit the state or its people. I hope that sometime we are able to find a way past this point, but given the way the current system is designed, I just do not see it happening.

I would just like to say one other thing. The Greens cannot be bought on this. We do not take corporate donations. That is another definite problem, because not only are the two parties fighting each other, but also the corporations, the fossil fuel industry and the mining industry are able to pay more in donations than they pay in tax. Really? Does that make sense? Is that how we want to run this place? I do not think so. The Greens will continue to not take corporate donations, and I really hope that other parties start realising the error of their ways. Yes, sure, their members may keep their jobs and they may even get into government, but they will not be working for the benefit of the community.

I feel that we are strong advocates for the people in the regions and on the land. I would really appreciate it if those plans for the regions, as developed by regional people, are out there so that we can start to support them and make sure that regional areas are seen as positive places to work, raise a family and be a part of the community, and have less of an impact on our planet. It can be done. Regional people see the devastating impacts of climate change firsthand. As we all know with the droughts, bushfires and floods across the country, climate change is happening. It is happening very fast. People might be able to sit in their city houses and ignore it from one day to the next, but it is happening. The people in the regions see it happening and they want action on it. I think that is what this government should be looking to do.

**HON KYLE MCGINN (Mining and Pastoral)** [12.23 pm]: I would like to thank Hon Dr Sally Talbot for bringing this motion to the floor today. I think it is great to be able to talk about all the things the government is doing in the regions, and there are many of them, particularly in the goldfields. We had a great candidate in the 2017 election who fought very hard to try to get that seat of Kalgoorlie and represent the constituents of that region, and we made many great commitments that we have been delivering on in that area. I am going to run through as many as I can in the time I have, but I am definitely not going to get through them all.

One of the big things we have been doing statewide that has impacted on the goldfields region is the investment of \$244.8 million in a coordinated and targeted methamphetamine action plan. It is a massive issue we have seen right across Western Australia, but I feel it has had probably a bit more impact in the goldfields region, because we have the gateway from other states on the Eyre Highway through to Norseman. We have seen a big increase in police presence, with all the new equipment and tools they now have to identify drugs coming through our borders.

Another massive thing I am very proud of, and I was able to launch it with the minister, was Target 120 in Kalgoorlie. It is very important. Crime gets spoken about quite a lot in the regions, and being able to intervene early and reduce youth crime is very important for not just the offender, but also, with a multiagency approach, the family, which is critical. It was a really proud moment to see the launch.

We had \$2 million to develop a motorsports plan for the goldfields, and that has been going along very well. We have had great consultation with all the different groups on the motorsports side of things, and we are putting together a plan on how best to increase motorsports infrastructure in the goldfields to capitalise on economic development through the events that come out there. It has been great to see the Kalgoorlie Desert Race getting bigger and bigger each year, and I am sure that once we increase some of that infrastructure, it will only get better.

We have a new family and domestic violence one-stop hub located in Kalgoorlie–Boulder, which is also critical. Family and domestic violence is a massive issue right across Australia, including the goldfields.

We have seen an investment in a step-up, step-down facility. That is absolutely critical. The people of the goldfields are crying out for more mental health support. That was something that went unnoticed in 2017. No other party committed to doing anything in the mental health space in the goldfields region, let alone the rest of the Mining and Pastoral electorate. Karratha has got a step-up, step-down facility as well. We have also seen an increase in the funding model from the Mental Health Commission in mental health services in the goldfields. We saw over \$10 million worth of investment in the last financial year alone to increase the mental health services in the hospital. That is absolutely critical. We are out there and a little bit isolated. It is important that we have the services to ensure that people are looked after in that space. In my view, mental health causes more strains on different departments than anything else.

Hon Dr Sally Talbot; Hon Martin Aldridge; Hon Laurie Graham; Hon Darren West; Hon Diane Evers; Hon Kyle McGinn

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We are delivering an MRI scanner for Kalgoorlie–Boulder. That is something we purposely went out there and said we would fund and deliver. That is something that no other party put on the table in the last election either. Did the local member commit to that? The local member says right now that he made no election commitments for the goldfields.

**Hon Robin Scott** interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Order, members! Hon Kyle McGinn will address the Chair.

**Hon KYLE MCGINN:** The local member has made it very clear that he made no election commitments for the goldfields region. We made plenty of election commitments and we are delivering on them. The MRI scanner is critical and it will be delivered. People know that Labor will deliver it. Since 2001, the Liberal Party has said countless words that it would deliver an MRI scanner, but it never did. We delivered a 64-slice CT scanner that was critical to the area, and then someone resembling the Grinch was quoted on the front page of the *Kalgoorlie Miner* as saying it was not good enough. Hon Robin Scott said it was a Volkswagen Beetle instead of a Mercedes. How dare he say that it is not good enough when we replaced a 16-slice CT scanner with a 64-slice CT scanner? Every time we deliver something, it is not good enough for the crossbenchers. Why do they not look at what we are doing for the regions, because it is very good?

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.