

McGOWAN GOVERNMENT — PRIORITIES

Motion

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Opposition) [4.00 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the Labor government for its abuse of power, using its majority to manipulate parliamentary processes instead of focusing on and prioritising the needs of Western Australians.

This is the last private members' business motion for the parliamentary year. That is worthwhile noting because it has been an extraordinary year. There is no getting away from it: there are six of us sitting on this side of the chamber and every week we have turned up and made sure that we asked the government the questions that get asked of us in the community. We tried to provide balance and scrutiny to a government that has an enormous amount of power. We would like to think that we would get to the end of the first parliamentary year of this term of government and have more complimentary things to say about the government with its enormous power. We would hope that we would get to the end of the parliamentary year and say that the government used its numbers judiciously and that we did not see abuses of its power in this Parliament, yet we have seen numerous examples of incredibly important legislation rammed through. The government's priorities were askew. Our communities and the state as a whole faced critical issues, but we saw this government being opportunistic about its priorities and ensuring that it could get through its very important political priorities, including the one vote, one value, or electoral reform legislation, that was just recently passed. This is the last opportunity the opposition has to move a motion under private members' business in the Legislative Assembly before the house rises for the year. It is a good time for us to reflect on the way this government has spent the first year of its second term. I want to go back to the beginning of last year, which seems like a long time ago. It was pre-COVID, pre-pandemic really—certainly “pre” any serious arrival of the disease in Western Australia. Some issues had already been ignored or failed to be addressed by this government. Issues relating to our health system were certainly prevalent and had been raised again and again by the previous opposition. Those matters were unaddressed.

I want to focus on what occurred when COVID hit. I spoke about this earlier when addressing the motion we supported to ensure that everyone in this house, members and staff, is vaccinated in the case of a lockdown. We had to come up with rules to deal with COVID in a state of emergency—in the very real sense that it was an emergency. It was very uncertain at the time, with no surety about what was going to happen in the state. A decision was made by the previous opposition and the Nationals WA that support needed to be offered to the government to allow it to make the decisions that it required. Advice from the Chief Health Officer, the police and all the emergency entities fed in to ensure we had the right legislation and we responded appropriately. At very short notice, we agreed to change the standing orders. We dealt with legislation that was sometimes handed to us as we walked into the chamber. Changes were made between the two chambers because legislation was drafted at very short notice. We made a conscious effort to provide support to the government. We wanted to work together. We accommodated that. As a result—I think I mentioned this earlier—on some occasions certain members could not come into this chamber and ask questions or represent their electorate on particular issues because we did not have capacity to have everybody in here at the same time. It was a very new and different working environment, but we accommodated it and we made it work because it was important. That is the kind of courtesy and, I guess, respect for this place that we displayed in quite different circumstances, and we thought we might see the same consideration from the government this year with its enormous majority. Before the election, the Premier said —

My promise is simple—I will lead a sensible, responsible, and experienced Government.

I did not hear the Premier say that he would introduce one vote, one value legislation to reduce regional representation in the upper house. I did not hear him say that he would ignore parliamentary processes and checks and balances when appointing the Corruption and Crime Commissioner—a very important role. I did not hear him say that the government would make a decision summarily to end native forestry. I did not hear him say that the government would make a decision to declare urgent bills, such as the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill that just went through Parliament, to gag debate and to then move them through. They are all very serious issues that Parliaments through time have had to consider. Governments have used the processes of Parliament to ensure that outcomes are appropriate. I refer particularly to those pieces of legislation, but also the way in which the Corruption and Crime Commissioner was appointed and the decision was made to end native forestry, which was a policy decision. That decision would not have come to Parliament, but we will be required to debate some legislation to put into effect some of the impacts of that decision. It would have been prudent for the Premier, knowing that he had an enormous amount of power, to be seen to be using it appropriately.

Any reflection on the last nine months, including gagging debate, briefing at very short notice on serious and significant issues that will have long-term impacts and ramifications, and being downright deceitful on electoral reform because the Premier said before the election that it was not on the agenda and then made it a priority as

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we came to this house, does not reflect well on a government that has a Premier who said, “I will lead a sensible, responsible and experienced government.” To me, it says government members have allowed that power to go to their heads. The Premier is right at the centre of that.

I thought, perhaps naively, that the Premier would understand the gravity of having such enormous power, that he would not want to be perceived to or actually abuse that power, but I have to say how wrong I was. Over the last 12 to 24 months, a cult of personality has been built around the Premier. He is the answer to everything in Western Australia. Not five minutes after the last election when such extraordinary numbers were delivered, he took on the role of Treasurer. It is clear from these benches that the government is the Premier. Anyone else has very little look-in. The fact that the Premier cannot delineate between the adulation that he gets on his social media pages and when he is in the public and some forums—although that is starting to change a little now—and his role to provide that solid and steady governance will be a failure for this government in the end. As reporter Gareth Parker so succinctly put back in August —

... spin might get you through the daily news cycle, but the work of governing catches up with you in the end.

The government made a decision to ram through legislation on electoral reform, which is going to reduce regional representation in our state’s Legislative Council at the next election, through gagging debate and without allowing the people of Western Australia to have their say, or even sending it to a committee. There is no use of the committee system. I do not know what the committees are doing in the other house. I know that the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations is working incredibly hard. The estimates committee has some very hardworking members on it. It has just recently been successful in putting together a homelessness inquiry. I look forward to the findings that the committee comes up with. I have served on some of the committees. I would have thought that the Standing Committee on Legislation would have been the perfect place to park the electoral reform legislation to allow for proper and appropriate scrutiny. Instead, debate was gagged and the government refused to contemplate any amendments or consider that a referendum might be held before it is enacted. The legislation could go through but a referendum could be held to see whether it is something that the people of Western Australia support. Instead, it was simply, “We’ve made the decision. We’re pushing it through.” In all honesty, it has been pushed through so that the Premier and the government can move on and they are betting on the fact that the people of Western Australia will have forgotten by the time we get to the next election. I can guarantee that they will not have, but that political opportunism should not preclude the Premier following due process. Gagging debate is a blunt instrument. That is just one of the examples we have seen over the course of the last nine months.

I go back to the comment that Gareth Parker made so succinctly back in August. He said —

... spin might get you through the daily news cycle, but the work of governing catches up with you in the end.

It has caught up, because in the last week and especially today, the Auditor General has tabled a couple of reports that go to the fact that this government is failing on the bread and butter of managing government departments, being accountable and dealing with those issues that are so very important. The *Audit results report—Annual 2020–21 financial audits of state government entities* was tabled today. I am quoting directly from the Auditor General’s introduction. She says —

Of great concern in this year’s results is the number of entities with serious deficiencies requiring a qualified opinion on financial statements, controls or key performance indicators, increasing from 7 entities last year to 17 this year, with 31 separate qualification matters. This is the highest number of qualified audit opinions ever reported by my Office. Too many qualifications related to significant deficiencies in payroll and procurement controls, and information system security.

...

A qualification is a serious audit matter and almost always requires additional audit effort.

Those are the words of the Auditor General. I will just take members back —

This is the highest number of qualified audit opinions ever reported by my Office.

That is very concerning. The table at page 11 of the report clearly indicates that the number of qualified issues has increased, as has the number of qualified entities. Figure 1 on that table is very informative. Over the course of this government, there has been a significant increase in the number of qualified audit opinions for state entities. The report continues —

Seventeen entities received qualified opinions in 2020–21 compared with 7 entities in 2019–20. A number of entities had more than one qualification within the audit report, and overall there were 31 discrete qualifications across these 17 entities, compared with 11 in the prior year. This is the highest number of audit qualifications ever issued by our Office. Qualified audit opinions matter in the public sector as they

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are integral to providing assurance that public funds and resources are being properly accounted for and well managed.

The report continues —

Too many qualifications related to significant deficiencies in payroll and procurement controls, and information system security. This is an indicator of significant shortcomings in these critical areas of financial management and business continuity, and a concerning trend.

I take members back to the Premier's comments that he would lead a sensible and experienced government. This report suggests that this government is failing to actually manage the state and the state's departments. My question to the Premier today was: what responsibility does he take for that, given that when he came to government, he overhauled the public service with the machinery-of-government changes that we know threw the public service into an enormous amount of disarray? We saw this in every estimates committee that we attended. I think of in particular the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. It took until this year for that department to be able to table an organisational chart that actually outlined its roles and responsibilities. That is four years for one department that is responsible for a significant amount of the business of the state government. The Department of Communities features significantly in this latest audit report. The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries features heavily, as does DPIRD, as I said. These are significant departments that have been mashed together. The Attorney General made the observation —

... what these results highlight most clearly to me is that government entities do not have unlimited capacity and capability. Strong foundations in financial management and governance are essential for supporting long-term confidence and capability in our public institutions ... this focus can inadvertently slip when entities take on additional functions and responsibilities over shortened timeframes.

I have no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has been a factor in this over the last 12 months, but the machinery-of-government issue that has been well canvassed across the last four years is the enormous amount of disruption within those mega-departments. Multiple people report to the directors general and it has caused an enormous amount of concern and disruption. That is now playing out in the record number of qualified audits that are of serious concern. If anybody is in any doubt, they should start reading from page 24 of the audit results report. In the first paragraph under each item that the Office of the Auditor General has looked at, which includes expenditure, payroll and human resources, governance, assets, accounting procedures, revenue, liabilities and inventory, it states how many controlled weaknesses have been identified and how many of them are repeats. These results are based on not just the last two years, but also matters that have been identified explicitly by the Auditor General and then not dealt with by those responsible—and, ultimately, the government is responsible.

I remember getting audits when I was a minister. I had to sit down with the Auditor General, who took me through what was likely to be in the body of the report and then asked for the response. From time to time we were then asked how we were progressing in dealing with those audit reports. Clearly, there are ministers who have not done that. They have failed in their duty to follow up a qualification provided by the Auditor General. It has been pointed out in black and white to them, and then repeated, with a few extra qualifications added on top of that. That is a serious concern. I go back to that comment from Gareth Parker —

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Directors general and executives are stretched beyond their capacity because the Premier swept in and mashed everything together as a part of the machinery-of-government plan. Those decisions are now coming home to roost. Instead of focusing on providing strong and steady leadership, this government has put the public service under further pressure. It has then used this Parliament to serve its own political purposes by taking advantage of its enormous majority. It has also sought to avoid scrutiny and accountability. The Premier's response in question time today avoided all responsibility for the qualified audit findings that have quadrupled under his government's watch—quadrupled! He completely ignored the incidents identified in last year's audit that have been unaddressed. I go back to the comment made by the Auditor General in the report —

This is the highest number of qualified audit opinions ever reported by my Office.

This government has been relying on spin and fluff. The agencies and public servants that this government relies on are under extraordinary pressure; they are stretched and it is starting to show. Nine months in, when we actually need our departments and agencies to be working at peak—just like we have been saying ad nauseam about the health department—some serious cracks are showing. I wonder whether the Premier actually asked the Auditor General whether those emerging pressures could have been avoided if those directors general were presiding over smaller departments and whether those mega-departments have contributed to those pressures. I doubt it, because the Premier made the decision.

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These fractures have emerged because of the changes introduced by this government. As I said, people working in the Department of Communities or interacting with that agency regularly report to us that they are under extraordinary pressure and it is chaotic. The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development is a monolith that has not realised the efficiencies the government said would come from putting all those agencies together. It is absolutely disastrous for this government to finish the year with an independent report from the Auditor General that says it has the dubious honour of receiving the highest number of qualified audit opinions ever, on top of the vaccine rollout audit that came out last week and concluded that the state government had failed to put in place processes to manage its responsibility. The work of governing catches up with a government when it relies on daily press conferences, spin doctors and media grabs to get through. Those cracks eventually show. As we said yesterday in the debate on the matter of public interest, all the questions that we asked about the vaccine rollout were reasonable. The Auditor General's report underlines that, because the Auditor General was asking the same questions.

I will continue by going through some of the decisions that the government has made, or not made, throughout the year. I start with hotel quarantine. That was an extraordinary situation. There had been a breach in our hotel quarantine system. There had been breaches in every hotel quarantine system around the nation, so that was not a surprise. What was concerning was the lack of action from the Premier and the government at the time. Reports have been done by Professor Weeramanthri. Those reports were kept under wraps for weeks and weeks after we had had the breach. It took multiple questions and repeated requests to the Premier and to the Minister for Health to prompt the release of those reports and, after those reports were released, for the government to tell us what it was going to do about quarantine breaches.

One of the actions that the government said it would take was to form a quarantine advisory panel. There were further questions from the opposition about who would be on that panel, what its terms of reference were and when it was going to meet. Those questions were all met with, "We can't answer that; we don't know." We asked multiple questions about this serious issue. That is on record in *Hansard*. The important issue that we needed to focus on at that time, along with the need to resource the health system, because we knew that was failing, was ensuring that the hotel quarantine system would be able to respond to the threat of COVID coming into our community. We asked multiple questions. Again, ministers walked into this place and chose not to be accountable but rather attack and deflect. Ultimately, it came out. The reports were released. The questions that we had asked through the processes of the Legislative Council and the media eventually showed that the government had dragged its feet in responding to those reports. Essentially, that meant that people had been placed at risk, because the government had been unwilling to deliver bad news. It preferred not to release that information and be held accountable. The opposition has said consistently that when a government has the numbers that this government has, it has to be completely accountable and transparent in the way that it makes decisions. That is especially important when it comes to issues like the management of COVID.

We then had the debacle of the SafeWA app. The use of that check-in app is very, very important, and it will become even more important as the borders are relaxed and eventually, to some degree, COVID comes into Western Australia. We all remember the promises that the Premier made about the importance of ensuring the safety of that data. However, it became evident that that data had been used by the police and there was a gap. The Premier and the Minister for Health chose not to tell the people of WA when they found out about that. Again, that had to be dragged out of them. Everybody will remember that the opposition was then alerted to a piece of legislation at 10.00 am. I cannot remember exactly what day that was; I suspect it was a Tuesday. We were told about it at 10.00 am and we were briefed at 5.00 pm, because that would have been the first opportunity that we had in a sitting week. We were then expected to pass that legislation by 7.00 pm. That is a pretty familiar format that we are getting used to in opposition at the moment. That piece of legislation was rushed in to deal with that loophole and to cover up the fact that the Premier had made a promise and then discovered that he had not kept it. The Premier could have come clean at the time and told everyone. Instead, we had this rush, and the opposition was asked once again to deal with a piece of legislation that we had seen for only five seconds.

That is just part of a pattern whereby the Premier refuses to be questioned. The Premier will not be questioned. That pattern was set very early in the piece. The Premier showed such arrogance in such a short period. This was at the very beginning of the parliamentary year. There was more to come. I spoke briefly about the appointment of the Corruption and Crime Commissioner. I do not want to dwell on this, but it was of major concern to the opposition, not because of who the Premier appointed, but how it was done. It was a well thought out process that had been laid out in legislation. The Parliament had gone through the appropriate processes to create an act that governed and guided the way that commissioners should be appointed, so that the government, the executive of the day, was removed from politicising the role of the Corruption and Crime Commissioner, who has such an important oversight role. The Corruption and Crime Commission should be above the political fray and what goes on in this house. The whole system was designed to avoid politicising that position. This government, and this Premier, in particular, chose to ignore all of that. With great arrogance, using its numbers, the government simply introduced a bill that inserted the name of Mr McKechnie into the legislation. It was a blunt tool that has set a very dangerous precedent.

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Dr D.J. Honey: It is a political appointment.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It is a political appointment—absolutely. It sets a very dangerous precedent, Leader of the Liberal Party. It is a very dangerous precedent for future governments.

I went back to look at the media coverage of this appointment. Of course, because there was so much spin around the appointment at the time that the processes of this house and the integrity of how this place operates was lost in the public conversation. For those of us who were in here and understand those processes, that should have rung very serious alarm bells. An editorial comment by Paul Murray's on 12 June was spot on. He stated —

The McGowan Government is now totally responsible for tainting McKechnie as “Labor’s man” which is unfair to the former Commissioner.

He went on to observe —

That appears to be of no concern to a government with a big enough majority in both Houses that it can do what it wants in Parliament regardless of precedent, protocol or the rules.

What we are seeing is a ruthless exercise of power without responsibility that should make people fearful of what else might lie ahead.

That is very succinct—maybe we should have read that in as the subject of private member’s business instead! He was very succinct —

What we are seeing is a ruthless exercise of power without responsibility that should make people fearful of what else might lie ahead.

We have seen the issues over the appointment of the Corruption and Crime Commissioner. We have seen legislation being rushed in to cover up and correct loopholes at very short notice. Then we came to electoral reform. We can add electoral reform to this list of the “ruthless exercise of power without responsibility that should make people fearful”, because what could be more arrogant, wilful or deceitful than the Premier denying that he was going to do something before the election and then making it his first order of business after the election? What could be more self-serving than to use the government’s majority in Parliament to permanently change the way that people are elected to this Parliament, when the Premier failed to tell the people whom it will impact most that that was his plan when he was asked directly? Again, the Premier is front and centre of this deceit. It was “not on the agenda”, according to the Premier! He was asked about this many, many times. He said, “I have been clear and I will be clear again. It is not on our agenda.”

I look around this chamber and wonder how many regional members of the Labor Party will face their constituents on this issue as they head back to their electorates. I wonder how they will have those conversations after they have failed to stand in this house and explain their support for this legislation. They failed to do that, and it was significant. We can only assume that all regional members opposite are in full agreement with the Premier and are prepared to have those conversations with their constituents, because nobody stood up to say otherwise. Instead, they chose to follow the political edict of the Premier and concentrate the state’s power and influence in the metropolitan area, because that is the outcome of that legislation. That is what will happen. It was incredibly disappointing to be a member of Parliament in this place while that legislation was going through, because being a member of Parliament with a voice for your community actually means something. Being fearless in your representation for those people and communities means something. On a number of occasions when such significant legislation has gone through the house, we have seen those who either should be speaking to make sure their constituents’ voices are heard, or explaining for the public record why they have chosen to support the legislation, simply sitting down and voting. As a result, we will have a permanent reduction of representation for regional Western Australians.

When we get to 2025, some serious thought will have to be given to how we make sure we do not lose the value the Legislative Council adds because of the way it has been constructed. It is not there to act as a rubber stamp for the Legislative Assembly; that is not the purpose of the Legislative Council. It does not have to provide unfettered support to the executive government and this house; that is not what this system is designed for, but that is the intent of the Constitutional and Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Equality) Bill 2021, as described by the Attorney General and the Premier. The votes in this house are here forever. There are members in both chambers who had opportunities to be courageous and on the right side of the argument, and to explain why they chose to support that legislation, but no-one in this house apart from two cabinet ministers stood up to speak, and the ministers were compelled to as a result of their cabinet solidarity. I am incredibly disappointed.

We accept that governments get to make policy decisions and bring policy through that we will not always agree with; that is the nature of government and opposition. But policy decisions aside, it was the process that was, once again, most disappointing. The policy was denied before the election, and then there was the appointment of a sham of a ministerial expert committee. When the committee was created, it called for submissions and then, two weeks

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later, a consultation paper was released to assist with the submissions. When we pointed that out, the committee had to extend submissions for a further two weeks because we wanted people to be able to respond to the submission paper that came out two weeks after the first call for submissions. It was a shambolic process, and window dressing at best. The expert committee was a farce.

We then saw the bill, and I think we were debating it the next day, from memory; it might have been the week after. But we were then asked to sit to all hours of the night to get through the bill, and there was a very clear gag order to make sure that the government could keep to its own time line. It all smacked of political opportunism. Despite the fact that the bill was delivered by the Minister for Electoral Affairs, the Premier was the one pushing this. I am not sure that that is something that anyone should be proud of. If we are going to change the way that people are elected to this chamber, it should be done in a very measured and respectful way, but the way this government did it was anything but that.

While we were dealing with that legislation—which I would argue should never have been a priority, but was clearly made a priority—we could have dealt with some of the issues I tried to raise with the Attorney General, such as the splitting of superannuation for de facto couples. The Constitutional and Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Equality) Bill 2021 was the government's number one priority and was the issue that was pushed through in the first nine months of this term of government. Regardless of whether we agree with it, it will not be needed until at least a year out from the next election, yet it was pushed through. I have attended functions and forums in my capacity as shadow Minister for Women's Interests and have had a number of different organisations raise their concerns about legislation to enable the splitting of superannuation for people in de facto relationships who are separating, yet that issue has not come through this Parliament. I would have thought that would have been right up the alley of members on the government bench. I would have thought that they would love to hang their hat on resolving that issue, which has been around for a long, long time. Instead, the Minister for Electoral Affairs focused on electoral reform, which will not be needed for at least another two years. It is just remarkable.

The most recent example of the frustrating ways that the government has chosen to use this Parliament is the debate on the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill. I am not going to dwell on this too much, because we finished talking about it at 12 o'clock last night, but just so we have it on the record as part of this debate, it is another example. The opposition was briefed on the bill on Tuesday, we started debating it last Wednesday —

Mr V.A. Catania: We were briefed on the overview.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Sorry, we were briefed on the overview. We had not actually seen the legislation. We debated it on Wednesday and were told it needed to be through on Thursday. The shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs negotiated so that we could debate it until midnight last night, and the debate was still gagged, so we did not get through all the clauses. That is a serious piece of legislation. I said that, and so did all our members on this side. We made the most sensible contribution we could make, not having been able to go through that legislation, to consult, to talk to our constituents and to invite comment from stakeholders. I received some in the few days we debated this bill that did not correlate with what the government is doing. We were given no courtesy or opportunity to test any of that appropriately. That is on something that will have long-reaching ramifications for this state.

It is an abuse of the way this house should work. When we are dealing with issues like the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill, electoral reform or any of the matters we have in here, there are processes in place to make sure that we get the best possible outcome. All this place is to the current government is a big rubber stamp. The government is setting a very dangerous precedent. The government thinks it is above questioning. The government should be willing to stand next to legislation it brings to this place and allow it to stand up to scrutiny, allow it to be questioned, if it has that much confidence in what it is doing. The government should plan its time better. Someone is not managing the time very well, if the government has to shove something like that through when we have had a whole raft of other pieces of legislation. If that was the most important thing we needed to do this year, it should have been on the agenda so that we could have dealt with it in a respectful way. It is disrespectful, and not just to the opposition, because this is about far more than the six people sitting on this side of the chamber. It is about all those stakeholders who took time to contribute and who look to this place as being sensible and measured—outside question time, which is clearly not sensible and measured! When we deal with legislation, those processes are typically about getting down to the business of being parliamentarians and making sure that we get an outcome. It is extraordinarily disappointing that legislation on such an important issue was rammed through this house, and the same will happen in the Legislative Council.

We believe this government should prioritise the needs of Western Australians, instead of using its majority to serve its own purposes, which is what we can see has happened over the last nine months. That is with real regret, because we see so many challenges in our community. We have a health system in crisis. We have skilled worker shortages that are having a real impact on not only the tourism industry, which was raised by the shadow Minister for Tourism today, but also the agricultural sector, our business community and the mining sector. That is a real

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and present concern. Prioritise the needs of Western Australians, look after our health system—make sure we are using that \$5.8 billion surplus.

I refer to the question about DVassist from the shadow Minister for Health. I get the political answer. It was the easiest one to come back with—that is, throw it back at the federal government and make it its responsibility. The question was whether —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for North West Central! Minister!

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It was a serious question, and there has been support from the federal government. The organisation is looking to expand. Discussion about lobbying the federal government to maintain its funding and about the state government providing support out of the \$5.8 billion surplus it has in its back pocket should have been responded to. The organisation continuing to offer support to regional families across the state is something that I thought should have been responded to rather than simply going straight to, “It’s not our fault; it’s the commonwealth’s fault.” The government could have done that. Instead, we heard the list of things that the minister is doing. I applaud her for investing in new domestic violence accommodation and programs, but the reality is that they impact on the people within proximity of those facilities. I wish we had one in every community in Western Australia, but we do not. DVassist is so important because it is a gateway and a signpost to supporting people who are in real need. Instead of saying in the run-up to the next state budget, “Yes, we will find a way, out of the \$5.8 billion surplus, to make sure that the federal government maintains its investment and we will put some money on the table; we will be able to expand and support that organisation to provide support to women and families right across this state”, that is how the minister could have answered the question.

They are the things that we mean when we say “prioritising the needs of Western Australians”. This past nine months has seen the pursuit of political agendas by this government. It hopes to get all the very distasteful things out of the way, which it knows will not be viewed well in advance of an election, to the detriment, I have to say, of the bread-and-butter issues that governments should be paying attention to. Our health system is in crisis, we have a housing shortage and we have a looming education crisis. We cannot get an answer about whether there is a plan to make sure there will be schoolteachers in front of students next year. It is all very well to say these are challenging times, but governments are charged with coming up with plans to address that. If there is one, please share it; if there is not, admit it, but do not tell us that we are asking unreasonable questions. It is a perfectly reasonable question that every parent, teacher and school community is asking in advance of the next school year. Those are the things that this government should be focused on. Instead, we have seen a manipulation of this Parliament for political purposes. A most disappointing precedent has been set in terms of the appointment of incredibly powerful people who oversee our government departments and Parliament. Outcomes in terms of one vote, one value legislation and the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill 2021 could have been dealt with in a far more courteous, professional and reasonable manner. As Paul Murray has observed in his articles, and others are starting to write more and more, this government is ruthless—ruthless in its application and pursuit of power.

Dr D.J. Honey: I wish they were ruthless!

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Ruthful—sorry; it was the wrong word. It is ruthless in its pursuit of power and in holding onto that power. It will be its undoing. At the end of the first nine months, the report card from not only the opposition but also the Auditor General, and any objective assessment of what we have seen happen in this chamber over the last nine months, says that this government is on a rocky road for the next three years if that is what we are going to see and that is how it will behave. That disappoints me greatly. I suspect no-one will lose much sleep over that in this chamber, but I happen to think that we should behave appropriately and be respectful of the processes that this Parliament stands for. I certainly have not seen a great deal of that over the past nine months.

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe — Leader of the Liberal Party) [4.48 pm]: I also rise to strongly support this motion. I want to continue the points that the Leader of the Opposition made. This government does not just get frustrated about being questioned, it also does not think it should be questioned. This government thinks that it is above being questioned. That behaviour is seen by the other side of the house. We saw that when we considered the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill and other bills before this Parliament. Ministers get upset and frustrated that we would question their bills because everything they do is perfect. When they do it, it is above reproach. It is above questioning. It is above any scrutiny. If we scrutinise legislation, it is somehow an insult to the government. There are mature heads on the other side of this chamber. I think that any members on the other side of the chamber who care to reflect would welcome being questioned and challenged, and would explain where they think that is wrong in a respectful way, not in an abusive and insulting way, and would accept when —

Dr A.D. Buti: You are the one who was insulting and personal last night in your third reading speech. That’s the thing with you, Honey, everyone else is wrong. Okay; the member for Cottesloe.

Ms Mia Davies; Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Tony Buti; Acting Speaker; Mr David Templeman;
Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Shane Love

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister!

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister!

Point of Order

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The member for Armadale should address the Leader of the Liberal Party in the appropriate and correct manner. He should apologise.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will refer to him as the member for Cottesloe, but definitely not the Leader of the Opposition, because that is a joke.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Point of order.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms R.S. Stephens): Just wait; I have not ruled on the last point of order. There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Dr D.J. HONEY: Thank you very much, Acting Speaker.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister, please stop interjecting.

Dr D.J. HONEY: We see once again that the government believes that it is above any criticism or questioning. The government gets upset when it is questioned. The Premier behaves like that in the chamber. During question time, the Premier was visibly upset. The Premier and the Minister for Health were lining up to shout abuse across this chamber —

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

Point of Order

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I cannot hear the Leader of the Liberal Party, who is right next to me, because the member for Armadale continually interjects and the diatribe coming out of his mouth is poisoning this whole chamber.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms R.S. Stephens): Minister, please refrain from interjecting.

Debate Resumed

Dr D.J. HONEY: We saw the Premier and the health minister literally shouting abuse across this chamber. They are two of the most senior members in this government —

Point of Order

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I think the Leader of the Liberal Party is impugning the Premier and Deputy Premier with “shouting abuse”. I think that is contrary —

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms R.S. Stephens): Member for North West Central!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I think it is contrary to the standing orders.

The ACTING SPEAKER: There is no point of order. If we could all just refrain from arguing with each other and let the Leader of the Liberal Party speak.

Debate Resumed

Dr D.J. HONEY: Shouting abuse across this chamber because —

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister!

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister, I call you for the first time.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister!

Dr D.J. HONEY: Thank you very much.

Ms Mia Davies; Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Tony Buti; Acting Speaker; Mr David Templeman;
Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Shane Love

As I say, what we see—we are seeing it demonstrated now in spades—is a government that believes it is beyond reproach. I know there are some sensible heads on the government’s side of the chamber, although that is not being demonstrated now —

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Acting Speaker, I do not seek interjections from the minister and he is constantly interjecting. I ask that you ask him to desist.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I have already asked him to do that.

Dr D.J. HONEY: As I said, we are seeing that demonstrated now. We have a new minister —

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister!

Point of Order

Ms L. METTAM: The member for Cottesloe, Leader of the Liberal Party, has stated he is not taking interjections and I am trying to hear his speech.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms R.S. Stephens): Member for Vasse, we have had this discussion.

Debate Resumed

Dr D.J. HONEY: As I say, it is being demonstrated here with a new minister who cannot take the fact that the government is being criticised. Mature heads on that side of the chamber would reflect and say, “Do you know what? I am open to criticism. I will respond in a mature and appropriate way, and if I ever think I am above reproach or questioning, then I will know that I’ve lost the plot and it will lead to trouble.” It will lead to an arrogant government full of hubris that will ultimately fail in what it sets out to do. That should be a warning sign to the other side.

Mr V.A. Catania: Lots of alarms going off.

Dr D.J. HONEY: There should be lots of alarms going off on the other side, member. Members opposite think they are beyond reproach. As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, there has been a complete abuse of the processes of this Parliament. When emergency legislation had to go through for the COVID pandemic, we on this side accepted that we should not expect to review that in the normal way. I will not repeat the Leader of the Opposition’s contribution, because I have other valuable points to make. However, we are seeing an abuse of the processes. The government thinks that we should not be able to scrutinise legislation, its legislation is so good that it is above scrutiny and we should not be able to consult the community as it has already consulted everyone who matters. When we point out that many other people have not been consulted and we have not had the chance to have that feedback, we are ridiculed, mocked, laughed at and insulted across the chamber, and the government just ruthlessly shoves it through. The government does not think that it should have to listen to another point of view. It thinks it has done it all perfectly. We can see it in the indignation of members on the other side. We have seen it on display again and again—the indignation of a government that thinks that it cannot be brought to task on any matter. That should be the warning bell for this government: “Hang on; we’re losing the plot here. We shouldn’t be shoving legislation through this Parliament when it’s not urgent. We should be allowing the opposition to scrutinise.” A good government would want scrutiny from the opposition. But, again, we hear the mocking, the ridiculing, the constant reference to the number of members here and the like. All I can say is that the six members on this side collectively have done about 10 times as much work and contributed about 10 times as much in this chamber as the 53 members on the other side have. What do we see? We see a handful of people who are allowed to speak. We see the designated heads who are allowed to speak and everyone else is told to be silent, and we saw that happen with important legislation.

Let me get on to the substantive matters that I want to cover. We have a government that thinks that because COVID has been managed well in the state of Western Australia, that is all there is to government. That is all it has to do; everything else is subsidiary to that. That is the only measure of the government’s performance. Clearly, protecting the health of Western Australians is a core function of government. It is an important function, and when there is a global pandemic, that function is even more important. We on this side have said that the government has done a good job of that and it has kept Western Australians safe, and we have supported the government in that process. Throughout the early days of the COVID pandemic, we supported the government in what it was trying to do. We supported whatever the demand was to get any legislation through this place. We met every single deadline; we did not hold up a single piece of legislation because we knew it was important and a genuine crisis. Of course, there is much more to government than managing COVID. Yes, it is important that that existential threat is managed, but, equally, we know that COVID will pass. As I have said many times in this place, it is not going to pass quickly; there will be lingering impacts from COVID for potentially decades. Certainly for the next few years, that is going to be a significant factor affecting our community and the way that government has to work.

This government has a golden opportunity—an opportunity that has not been afforded to any government for some considerable time and one that I think has not been afforded to a Labor government in the history of the Parliament. I am being a student of politics here, so I am sure that the Leader of the House can correct me if I am wrong in that statement. This government has an opportunity to set an agenda for the future of the state of Western Australia, but that is what we have not seen. We have not seen any agenda for the future of the state of Western Australia. What we see—it is the *modus operandi* of this government—is lots of plans. It has lots of plans. We heard that in response to questions in question time today: “We’ve got a plan.” The Premier’s substantive answer to a question about the preparation of the health system—the Minister for Health gives the same response—is, “Yes, things are pretty terrible. We have been in power for only a bit more than four and a half years, but we’ve got a cracking good plan.” The government has a plan and it releases a glossy plan. It is what we saw in all the announcements about Metronet—the release of a glossy plan. It gets a group of bureaucrats together and writes a strategy. We saw it with the sustainable health review. The sustainable health review was done at the start of the last term of this government. What did it lead to? We have a hospital system that is quite literally in crisis and quite literally getting worse. Since the member for Vasse raised these matters last year, at the start of this parliamentary term, every measure has got worse. We have gone from code yellows to code blacks being a regular feature, but the government has a cracking good strategy.

The trouble with a strategy is that it does not do anything or achieve any particular outcome. We have seen it in the government’s so-called hydrogen strategy. Members know that this is an area about which I am especially passionate. The government mouths the words: “Yes. Hydrogen is the future. Hydrogen is the future for manufacturing.” But, in fact, in substantive terms, this government has done nothing. We have seen the rest of the world and the rest of Australia get on with this, but we have seen nothing here other than small projects. We have seen a blue hydrogen project that will have a green hydrogen aspect to it, but, overwhelming, that project is based on natural gas with some convenient hydrogen out of spare electricity from, mostly, solar panels on roofs in Western Australia—that is it. When it comes to substantive major hydrogen projects, which should be the future for Western Australia, we see nothing. The responsible ministers—the Minister for Energy and the Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade—should really be ashamed. Their performance, not their spin—their spin has been world class—has been absolutely woeful. They have delivered nothing in terms of meaningful green hydrogen projects in the state of Western Australia. We see small-scale projects; meanwhile, in the rest of Australia, this is improving.

The Minister for Energy likes to make fun of the energy policy that we went to the last state election with. The reality is that the larger part of that policy, if this government had actually implemented it, would have meant that we would have been well on the way to a sustainable green hydrogen industry in Western Australia. Instead, what do we see? As I said, we see nothing meaningful from this government in this space other than statements, spin and platitudes. Why is that? The reason is that the state has done nothing to establish the critical enabling infrastructure for that to occur. It has done nothing to make sure that the principal industrial area that should be dealing with this—Oakajee—is even beginning to be readied. It is still, literally, a bare paddock. In fact, the ownership of that estate has changed from the government. It was used as part of the compensation settlement for the extinguishment of native title in the midwest. The ownership of that land has now changed from the government to another group. That will add another level of complexity for anyone who tries to develop it. There is nothing there. We have seen the consequence of that. In other areas, we have seen that there is no available land for the development of that project.

This is a globally competitive market. The Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia recently—in fact, today—came out with a report on this. I am talking about the Chamber of Minerals and Energy. I think we could easily say that the government has been happy to stand with arms around shoulders saying that the Chamber of Minerals and Energy supports this. This is what the CME had to say about the government’s hydrogen strategy. I will quote one section of it —

... initiatives are under-resourced relative to international competitors, and industrial development support is yet to emerge to fully take account of the significant economic and technical challenges. Furthermore, legislative and regulatory reform is often uncertain and opaque, and hydrogen policies are not fully integrated into an energy-systems and economy-wide abatement framework.

That is what the Chamber of Minerals and Energy had to say about the government’s hydrogen policy. This is a group that, as I said, the government is happy to quote from and say that it supports the government’s legislation that it brings before Parliament. The government is happy to go to the functions and all the opening ceremonies and the like, but that is what the CME had to say, and it is precisely correct. The government does not understand it. Everyone knows that the midwest of Western Australia has world-class renewable energy assets. That is apparent, but it has nothing to do with the government. It is a quirk of geography that that is the case. That is the only reason it is there, but it is there. We are blessed with that, and everyone knows it. The government thinks that because we have that first-class renewable energy asset, all the other things will follow and the government will not have to do much other than lean on industry to do all the other things. Clearly, that is completely unsatisfactory.

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What have we seen? We have seen the pre-eminent Western Australian company in the renewable energy space, Fortescue Future Industries, investing a full 10 per cent of all its profits out of Fortescue Metals Group into it. Fortescue was desperate to do a project in Western Australia, but what happened? It had to go to Tasmania, New South Wales, Queensland, the United Kingdom, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Papua New Guinea and other jurisdictions offshore to develop its projects. I have spoken with Fortescue's senior managers. Fortescue is desperate to do a major project in Western Australia, but the lack of preparation by this government is so great that it has not been able to do it. This is not a spat by some fly-by-night group that just wants to prove a point and punish the government. Fortescue's preference is to do all this in Western Australia if it can. That is where it would do it. Instead, the literally billions of dollars that it is investing outside some R&D work that it does, mostly associated with its mining operations, is being spent in other places. Ultimately, that is thousands and thousands of the highest quality jobs—the sorts of jobs any member would be proud to have and that members would want their children to have in the future. They are high-quality, exciting and leading edge jobs, yet none of that is happening in a meaningful way in this state.

[Member's time extended.]

Dr D.J. HONEY: Fortescue is not the only company that has to leave Western Australia. Good Water Energy is a geothermal energy company. For a number of years, it has been trying to work with the state government to establish geothermal projects. Geothermal energy is the poor cousin, if you like, of renewable energy in the state, but it is an extraordinarily exciting opportunity. The reason for that is that geothermal energy provides genuine baseload energy and, effectively, inexhaustible renewable energy. It has a very small footprint compared with solar cells or wind turbines and it has a very low environmental impact, particularly compared with wind turbines, which have a significant environmental impact, particularly on birds. Geothermal energy is a fantastic opportunity. Good Water Energy tried and tried. It tried everything in this state. It had meetings with the Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade and with the Minister for Mines and Petroleum, because it requires drilling a hole in the ground, and that requires the minister's assent. Good Water Energy identified areas that it could go to and it worked with major Western Australian companies to set up projects. At every turn it was worse than the government not facilitating this; it was blocked by the government. It is as though the government does not want that development to occur. What happened? Good Water Energy had to go to the Northern Territory. It is now investing tens of millions of dollars on its first project in the Northern Territory instead of in Western Australia.

This technology is not as well developed as solar and wind. If geothermal technology even partially meets the expectations that the proponents believe it can and this technology bears fruit—again, these are not speculative people who are looking to pull money out of the share market; these are people who want to work on substantive, major projects—it will revolutionise renewable energy around the world. The company that I am talking about has a substantive track record in core technology for geothermal energy. It has had to go to the Northern Territory to get support. In particular, it is a quirk of geology in this case that Western Australia is a particularly good jurisdiction to utilise this technology. This is not the conventional geothermal energy extracted from so-called hot rocks; this is another form. We have an enormous potential opportunity. If it comes off, effectively, we will have clean energy for every purpose that we can imagine. It is a remarkable technological feat. Why would this state government not do everything in its power to facilitate that energy? As I said, from what I have been told, it seems determined that it will not happen. It is extraordinarily disappointing. Yet that company went to the Northern Territory and immediately got support from the Northern Territory government. I was dumbfounded by that. Again, we have a government that talks about its commitment to green energy. Here is an emerging technology and the government is doing nothing to help it and everything to frustrate it in this state.

There is one thing going on at the moment that is extremely disturbing when it comes to proper governance. We heard the announcement from the government that it will hand out section 91 licences to allow access to land. In questions in the upper house, we learnt that vast areas of the state are being handed over to organisations under these section 91 licences, one involving 660 000 hectares, another involving 1.75 million hectares in the goldfields—Esperance area, and others involving 120 000 hectares and 10 000 hectares in the midwest. There has been zero transparency—none whatsoever. It is completely unclear what governance controls this. It is completely unclear and disturbing that we could see land banked by companies that have no intention of developing their project, but they are taking up valuable real estate, which is critical to realise this world-class renewable asset that we have all the way from Geraldton to Karratha. Then they will monetise that land in another way. This is really disturbing. I understand that 90 more applications are being considered. We are seeing vast tracts of the state tied up in this way. We have been told that those areas will potentially be converted under an exclusive licence.

If these projects are genuinely funded—not speculative but effectively shovel-ready and the companies have the finance, so all they need is the land—I would applaud the move and say it is good that the government is providing land because a certain surface area is needed to generate that energy. If this process is speculative and a case of first come, first served or the government is looking after its mates, that is profoundly disturbing. We will find out

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in the fullness of time. That will become apparent. At the moment, that whole process is completely opaque. It is a case of first come, first served. When a company comes in, it gets consent. What is the basis for that? What is the criteria? That is something that disturbs me, and I think it should disturb most people in the Parliament.

Let us look at the area of critical minerals. We hear the government talk about critical minerals. I will show members the government's output in critical minerals after four and a half years. I have here the state government's output in critical minerals in four and a half years. It is a six-page glossy brochure. That is it. We hear the Minister for Mines and Petroleum, the Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade and others talk about critical minerals. It took the government four and a half years to produce a six-page glossy document that is full of platitudes. It is just another bit of spin: "We're doing something on critical minerals. Look, here's our six-page glossy document." That is the government's response. The federal government has also been doing this. The federal government knows that critical minerals are the enabling plank to the renewable energy industry. It knows that all the rare-earth minerals are critical in catalysis for fuel cells in high-efficiency electric motors, which again are critical in the renewable energy world. It knows that those rare-earth minerals are critical. The federal government produced a 172-page detailed strategy, the *Australian critical minerals prospectus 2020*. It identifies every single critical mineral producer and mine site or prospective mine site in Australia. It has all the details. It was developed as part of the strategy to broaden critical minerals markets outside China. This document is an enabler, so that any company in the world can come here and will know who to contact. The federal government is facilitating this. It is a detailed, meaningful strategy. That is what a critical minerals strategy is, not a six-page glossy so that the government can say it is doing something.

As I said, we hear lots of lectures and sanctimonious comments from the Minister for Mines and Petroleum, saying that the government is world leading but the reality is that the Western Australian government is asleep at the wheel on critical minerals. Yes, we have some critical minerals, particularly nickel and cobalt. It has nothing to do with the state government. Those projects have occurred under the Mining Act and other acts that have existed through time immemorial. I will give credit to both sides of government in Western Australia, which have been good at facilitating mining, but there is nothing new here. There is no new initiative or strategy coming out of the document. I will not go through the detail but, honestly, anyone who is looking for a strategy or a way that the state government is actually assisting the critical minerals industry would be bitterly disappointed by this document. It delivers nothing for the state of Western Australia. I am glad to see the Minister for Mines and Petroleum here.

Mr W.J. Johnston: It is interesting that I was just in a meeting with a company in that sector that was complaining about the behaviour of the commonwealth government.

Dr D.J. HONEY: It has actually done some work, minister, not just produced a six-page glossy brochure.

Mr W.J. Johnston: You have no idea!

Dr D.J. HONEY: A six-page glossy brochure; that is your contribution. I have seen your output. It is like the —

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you.

Dr D.J. HONEY: It is like the *Yes Minister* guide to political speak. It has been demonstrated here that this government, with an absolute majority in both houses of Parliament, achieved that majority through a lie. This government knows that if it had gone to the public of Western Australia and said, "Elect us and then we are going to fundamentally change the electoral system in this state to take away people who are designated specifically—18 members of the 36 upper house members—to represent the regional areas. We are going to make it a statewide electorate", it would not have received the upper house votes in those electorates. That is a fact and government members know it. That is why the Premier denied it seven times before the election. Go back and look at the interview panel at which Peter Law asked the Premier about it. Peter Law is an experienced and quality journalist. He was very specific. He knew what Labor was likely to want to do, so he asked the Premier in the clearest, most specific way what he intended to do and whether he intended to bring in electoral reform. The Premier said repeatedly that it was not on his agenda. The government has absolute control of Parliament through a fraud and through deliberately misleading the public of Western Australia. We now see a government that, as I said, believes it is above any questioning and any reproach. It cannot stand questioning. It cannot tolerate it; government members get upset, furious, wild and abusive whenever questions come across the chamber.

Mr R.R. Whitby: Look at us; we're furious over here. We are sitting here so furious! We are very relaxed.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Can I say, minister —

Mr R.R. Whitby interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Minister, I will devote a little bit of time to this. Other than the minister's last little contribution, can I say, if the other ministers handled themselves, by and large—other than in the last 20 seconds—in the respectful

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and competent way that the minister does in his areas, maybe we would have a government that is worthy of respect overall. Unfortunately, you are a gem in the rough, minister. I am sorry if that hurts you politically.

Mr R.R. Whitby interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Do not go and bring the tone down now, minister! I tell members that what they see on this side is an opposition that is passionate about the state of Western Australia, that cares about what happens in this chamber and is prepared to ask the questions that need to be asked on behalf of the people of Western Australia.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members! Thank you.

Dr D.J. HONEY: That is what they see, as opposed to a government that is arrogant and full of hubris. This government does not care about what anyone in the state thinks because it has the power and the numbers and no-one else in this state can challenge it because it has absolute control.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [5.20 pm]: I am very pleased to make a contribution. I would not normally make a contribution this early, but I have been roused by some of these comments. It is interesting that the Leader of the Liberal Party highlights a number of things.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Excuse me, Leader of the House. Are you the lead speaker for this motion?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes, but I will not use all my time, because I am happy to have some debate on this. Of course, this government was elected overwhelmingly by the people of Western Australia for a number of key reasons. In the first term of this government, we ensured the safety of Western Australians.

The repair of the economy was also a key focus. If members remember back to the lead-up to the 2017 election, the other side in power had allowed debt and deficits to explode. It had left the economy in an appalling state. That is what it left the incoming Labor government in 2017: a budget that had been blown and was heading towards record levels of debt that would, of course, have a great impact on future generations. It left a list of projects that had been promised but never delivered. Of course, we have numerous examples of that, including the Ellenbrook rail line, amongst others. Promises were made and were not delivered. Some good economic times were totally squandered. We came to government faced with these appalling economic circumstances. The McGowan Labor government set about repairing the budget as its first course of action. Under the stewardship of the then Treasurer, Hon Ben Wyatt, that is what we did, because discipline was required with regard to the economic circumstances that we faced.

In the lead-up to 2019, indicators were already showing that this government's intervention in the perilous state we were left with was beginning to turn around our economic circumstances. Then, of course, COVID struck in 2020. This government, focusing very much on the health and safety and wellbeing of Western Australians, set about making important economic decisions that would also protect our economy. What have we seen in five years? We have seen very, very clear positive outcomes for Western Australians—things that the people opposite, including the member for Cottesloe, hate. They hate the fact that Western Australia is now enjoying record levels of employment.

Dr D.J. Honey: No, we don't!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: You hate it! You hate it because your born-to-rule mentality is that only one party in this place can ever achieve those sorts of outcomes. We have demonstrated very clearly, and been supported and acknowledged by Western Australians, that Labor in government can not only deliver high-quality outcomes in terms of the economy, but also sustain those outcomes. Our unemployment level is now at a record low of less than four per cent when compared with rates in other states and territories of Australia. Our practices in terms of the health and safety and wellbeing of Western Australians and our border policy has kept us safe; members opposite forget that. To say that they have supported the government's measures against COVID is a crock. The member for Cottesloe and his party were out there supporting Clive Palmer and others to try to bring down a number of our —

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The leader of government business, the lead speaker on this motion, is misleading Parliament with his comments. He should withdraw those comments.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent): This is a debate. There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Of course there is no point of order because they do not like it. They hate the fact that there they were, hand in glove with Clive Palmer, and when they were found out, they hated it. They are still doing it. They hate it. They hate the fact of this.

Several members interjected.

Point of Order

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Ms L. METTAM: The Leader of the House is speaking untruths and he is misleading the house.

Mr V.A. Catania: I would say that it's a lie!

Ms L. METTAM: Lie.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent): This is a debate and there is no point of order on the debate. You will have an opportunity to reply.

Debate Resumed

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Gee, they have got glass chins. They hate this! They hate the fact that we have unemployment figures at record lows.

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order, member for North West Central.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: They hate the fact that the economy of Western Australia is lauded not only around the state, but also around the country and, indeed, around the world because of the way that this government has managed it. They hate the fact that we have low unemployment levels and record numbers of people doing well.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members for North West Central and Vasse, you will have your opportunity.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: They hate it and they will always hate it because they have a born-to-rule mentality. They think that it is a natural cause that the Western Australian public should always elect a Liberal–National alliance because they manage the economy. We saw what happened to the economy under the previous Liberal–National government in the eight and a half years before this government was elected. We repaired the economy, and then COVID came and we kept the state safe, but we have also managed to keep the economy strong. Members opposite hate that and they will always hate it. Why? It is because they have been found out.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Let us look at unemployment. Let us look at what this government has done in terms of manufacturing. We have returned manufacturing of railcars to Western Australia. Remember the famous Matagarup Bridge —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! This is really entertaining for the last Wednesday of the year, but Hansard cannot hear. Can we just have a return to the Leader of the House. The member for North West Central and member for Vasse will have an opportunity to speak.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The Liberal–National government wanted to build and manufacture the Matagarup Bridge in Malaysia because they had no confidence in Western Australian ingenuity. What did we do when we came to government? We reversed that decision because we actually believe that Western Australians and Western Australian ingenuity can manufacture a whole range of products for not only our state and our nation, but also the world. We have returned railcar manufacturing to a new factory in Bellevue in which railcars will be assembled and constructed as rolling stock for Metronet. Let us look at the Metronet program, which members opposite hate. The other day, they said, “We represent everybody.” The member for Cottesloe was loud. He does not represent anybody. One of the great challenges that the National Party now has as an opposition is that there is a vast number of people who will rely on a high-quality, expanded Metronet program in the metropolitan area. We are delivering routes to Thornlie and connecting to Cockburn, and routes connecting to Two Rocks. We will also have routes connecting to Ellenbrook, which the former government promised about four times but failed to deliver; in fact, they kept cancelling it. It is no wonder that when the people of Ellenbrook see a Liberal come doorknocking, they almost do terrible things to them, because they remember! You took the people of Western Australia as fools, and you were punished, because you deserved to be punished.

Let us look at TAFE fees. Before the McGowan government was elected, you, under the former member for Scarborough as the responsible minister, hiked up TAFE fees across the board, some of them by 400 to 500 per cent. What did we do? We said no; how can you not have a functioning, effective TAFE system? You have to make sure that the courses are affordable. We saw in the TAFE sector that enrolments were going down. Of course they were, because you had hiked up the price of courses by thousands of dollars. The numbers of students were going hugely down. You took the Western Australian public for fools, and you hated it. So, what did we do? We froze TAFE fees, and then we reversed them. We now have many more people enrolled in TAFE across the board in a whole range of courses, because it is affordable. If you want to train Western Australians to fill jobs in Western Australia, train

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them, but please make it affordable. That is what this government has done. That is what you failed to do. You failed to do it, and you hate it, because you have been found to be wrong. You hate it!

We have also done a whole range of other measures. We now represent people across the sector. We have got people in the western suburbs who are very proud to have their local members representing them. I have to tell you, and this comes to the very point, “Mr Silver Spoon” from Cottesloe, of why you are so wrong, that the fact of the matter is that there are now people —

Point of Order

Dr D.J. HONEY: Madam Acting Speaker, point of order.

Several members interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: The Leader of the House more than anyone else should know that he has to use the correct reference to members of Parliament, and he cannot use the slang expression that he involved himself in then.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The member for Cottesloe represents those born with a silver spoon in their mouth, not the people who live there, but he himself. He is the one with the silver spoon in his mouth. The reality is this —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent): Leader of the House! I have not ruled on the point of order yet.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Sorry.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I just want to remind the Leader of the House to use the correct title for the member for Cottesloe. Thank you.

Debate Resumed

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Member for Cottesloe, I have to tell you something, and you will hate this, too. I tell you what: the member for Nedlands and the member for Churchlands are out there campaigning. They are doorknocking. They are communicating with their communities. Do you know what the feedback they get is? People have never, ever heard of the Liberal members before, those in Nedlands and those in Churchlands and in South Perth, those electorates that you took for granted for so long, some of them for over 100 years. What has happened? We have got members in those places now, who are out there campaigning, who are out there selling the message of the McGowan government and who are out there explaining that it is important to invest in TAFE, it is important to invest in schools, it is important to invest in local manufacturing and it is important to invest in local jobs. That is the message they are taking out to those people on the doorsteps in Churchlands, in Nedlands and in South Perth. What are they getting as a response? First of all, it is, “We’ve never seen this happen before.” That is because your former members took them for granted. You know that deep in your heart, because that is what your own polling and your own review of your campaign showed. You are full of hot air and full of rhetoric, but when the hard work on the ground was required, you were vacant for many, many years. I am so proud of the members that we have in this place, from the Kimberley through to Esperance, with our upper house members down there—right through. You can jump on the Forrest Highway and not cross through a conservative electorate, and I am proud of that! You can get right down to Albany, and I am proud of that. The member for Warren–Blackwood is working hard.

The simple fact is this.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: What is wrong with you?

The simple fact is this.

Several members interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Geography was not a strength of mine; nor was maths IV in Northam Senior High School!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Leader of the House! Sorry, I am on my feet. This is really good, but think of Hansard, please.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I have done only 11 minutes; I thought I had done more than 11 minutes!

Members opposite hate it, and they have been found out. I think that one of the interesting things that came out of the 2021 election was this: people recognise if you do the right thing, keep people safe, focus on key messages and make sure that the messaging is all about taking action. That is what this government has done. Members opposite come in here and say that we have abused parliamentary processes and all that sort of thing. We are getting on with the job of governing Western Australia because that is what we were elected to do. We put through very important legislation this year and I will go through some of it. We passed a whole range of things. I will then talk a little bit about the opposition’s so-called guillotining and other processes. Some members opposite were not here during the Barnett period.

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Mr V.A. Catania: He never guillotined.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes, he did!

Several members interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Colin Barnett, one of the former Leaders of the House who then became the Premier, actually put out a media statement heralding a new time management system that was introduced to the Legislative Assembly. It was a system to progress legislation through the house in an orderly fashion. He argued that the government had used the system on only 10 bills in the previous 18 months. He talked about his time management system.

Mr V.A. Catania: That was the 90s!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: It does not matter! It does not matter when it was. He did it during your time! He did it during the Barnett years, mate!

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for North West Central!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes, you did! You guillotined things quite often. I was here. I do not know where you were. You were in the other place for the first half of it! You still do not know quite where you fit.

Mr V.A. Catania: I was on your side!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes, but I did not like you then; now I do not like you more!

The fact of the matter is: we are elected here to govern and that is what we have done. I will go through some of the important legislation that has been introduced, including electoral reform. Sorry! For 100-plus years, one of the priorities of the Labor Party has actually been to reform the other place.

Several members interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I am sorry, but it is! We have done it.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Moore!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The simple fact of the matter is this: that has always been something that the Labor Party has believed to be unfair and we fixed it. We have brought in important financial legislation, including, of course, the state budget. I might say that of all the budgets in Australia, the budget that was handed down by the Premier; Treasurer was one of the most amazing because it was the only one that delivered a surplus. Why? It is because we kept the state safe and we believed that we have to protect those industries that were delivering for the economy. And what has happened? Record employment, so we now have the interesting situation whereby we need to make sure that we train people to fill the positions that we need to fill.

The opposition members are using this motion and their arguments because they are lazy. That is the simple fact. They are lazy.

Mr W.J. Johnston: It was in their report.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes, it was. When you had the opportunity, member for Cottesloe, to demonstrate leadership, to stand up against a whole range of distasteful attributes of a member in other place, you were found wanting. You could not even bring yourself to say that that behaviour was not acceptable. You could not even do that. Why did you not stand up to them? We know you cannot stand up to Hon Nick Goiran because you are powerless. In fact, your own preselection process highlighted how hopeless you are, and they saw that before you were elected to this place. The Liberal Party had the opportunity to preselect a high-quality candidate. We thought the person who we expected to be preselected for Cottesloe, who had a corporate background, would be magnificent as a candidate. You were found wanting. We have all seen what “The Clan” said about you.

The Liberal Party has this person now, and he has no control. He could have stood up and said, “Right, there is a range of things we must stand against”, including some of the distasteful things within his own party, and he did not do it; he failed to do it. That was a test of his leadership, and he failed. He then comes in here and says that everything is out of control on this side. I am sorry, but we have been a very disciplined government because we have focused on the things that are important for Western Australians: keeping our economy strong; training future generations through our TAFE and education systems; returning manufacturing industries back to Western Australia because we believe we have the capacity and innovation to be able to deliver; and delivering a record infrastructure spend, whether in health, education or innovation. That is what responsible governments and governments that are focused on action do.

Western Australians broadly understand the direction in which we are steering this state, and they acknowledge that a lot of hard work has been put into it. Members opposite do not like that, and I get that they do not like it. I get

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that it can be pretty lonely over there. I have sat on that side of the house in various roles, and one of the things that amazed me about the current opposition is budget day. I can remember budget days in opposition. As soon as the budget was handed down, we had a team of people going through it forensically, line by line, hungry to find the things that had not been provided for under the Barnett–Grylls government. What did opposition members do? They said, “We’d better find a couple of vibes to talk about and we’ll go and do a bit of press.” There was no hunger, because they still think this is easy and that the electorate will just change its mind and vote for them.

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Cottesloe, if you continue to interject, I will call you to order.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The reality is that the Premier has set a course of action for our economy, for building the state and for trying, as best as possible, to cushion the impacts of an international pandemic. Up to this time we have done brilliantly well, and that is because the people of Western Australia have been with us, but at every opportunity, members opposite have tried to undermine us. Then suddenly in today’s motion, it was, “Oh, we’ve been supportive all the way through.” Well, history does not show that. It does not show that in respect of who the opposition supported against us. The Leader of the Opposition in the last Parliament, the former member for Scarborough, was out there calling for the borders to come down. While we were making sure that the safety and wellbeing of Western Australians was the primary concern, she was calling for the borders to come down.

Can members imagine if we had done that? Look at Australia more broadly. Look at what is happening around the world now with COVID-19. There are fourth waves in a number of countries that have already been decimated by the pandemic. Sadly, older generations in particular in some countries, like Italy, have been decimated. Austria is going through a fourth wave now. The Netherlands is getting it; Germany is getting it. The United Kingdom has been going in and out of it and now Belgium is getting it. We are so privileged in Western Australia; we are so safe. It is because of the steadfast focus of the Premier and the government, bringing with him and the government the people of Western Australia who have done what has been asked of them in order to ensure that safety, health and wellbeing are protected. We know that when we reach the thresholds of vaccination in the months ahead that we will face a new challenge, because COVID will make its way here when we open up our borders. But we are so much better placed to face that challenge than many other places in the nation and, indeed, the world. I reckon the government should get some credit for that. I tell members what: the Premier has put up with an absolute load of the proverbial from a whole range of sources, and in many respects it has been aided and abetted by you guys.

Several members interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: It has. It has been aided and abetted by you guys. A classic example is the vaccination issue. The opposition has been pulled, struggling. It hated having to support the effort. It still has not done it properly.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Moore, you will have your opportunity.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The fact of the matter is that we know that if we are able to get to 80 per cent and then 90 per cent vaccination, we will at least be in a better position than many other states and territories have found themselves in. The race in New South Wales and Victoria is because they were so badly hit by COVID. Their economies have been decimated. Small businesses and a whole range of businesses have been absolutely decimated because they were hit hard. The Premier has had to put up with so much rubbish from people. He has had his family threatened and he has been threatened, but he is steadfast about making sure that we protect Western Australians. He called out the dog whistling of the Prime Minister late last week. It was just appalling, because the Prime Minister’s words played to those people out there who believe that they can be violent and make threats. I have listened to some of the things that the Premier has been receiving on his phone; he has played some of them to me. They are bloody appalling; they are absolutely appalling. He is getting them all the time.

I tell members what: this state is in a great position because of the work of government and the people of Western Australia. That has been supported strongly by business and a whole range of key stakeholders, but the ones we have heard less support from sit over there. The ones we have seen undermining and sitting on the fence and who have not been quite as strong or passionate as they could have been to encourage people to do the right thing sit over there. I know where I sit. I am proud to sit with all these people on this side of the house, because I know they are working hard in their electorates. I know they are out there expressing the important messages of government.

We are doing stuff. That is what governments do. The opposition may not like that, but that is what governments do, and this government will continue to do it over the next three and a bit years. We have a program for infrastructure, we have a program for our health system, we have a program for our education system and we have a program for science and technology. We have a program for bringing tourists and visitors back and sharing this wonderful state with them. We have those things in place. It is not just a plan; it is an active journey. It is working because there are many, many people across this globe who would love to trade places with us. We should respect how privileged we are. That is

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why we will continue to introduce legislation that is focused on doing the right thing by Western Australians. That is why the opposition's motion is so out of kilter—it is so wrong. We are prioritising the needs of Western Australians. We have done it from day one. We fixed up the previous government's problems when we came to power in 2017, and will continue to do it. This government will always focus on the interests of Western Australians. It will always be our priority. That is why there is absolutely no way we would even entertain supporting rubbish like this!

MR V.A. CATANIA (North West Central) [5.50 pm]: What a performance by the retiring member for Mandurah! I will read out what the Premier does to people on this side of the house. I will read what he said in this chamber, when I was not present, on 23 August 2018.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Sit down, member for Armadale, you have to listen to this as well!

I will tell members what happened when members of the opposition wanted to visit Moora Residential College—a college that this government cut funding to. Remember the Save the Schools of the Air campaign? That campaign was run because the Premier cut funding. He wanted to get rid of them. The opposition said, "We'll go to Moora Residential College to champion the cause to try to save it." I was approved; the former member for Warren–Blackwood was approved; the local member, the member for Moore, was approved; the Leader of the National Party was approved; and a couple of other upper house members were approved. Suddenly, at the eleventh hour, the member for Warren–Blackwood and I were not allowed to go to the college. The member for Warren–Blackwood asked why that was the case. We had gone through the appropriate processes and protocols and it was agreed to by the education minister, Hon Sue Ellery, that we were allowed to go. Suddenly, that approval was cancelled. This was the Premier's response to why I, the member for North West Central, was not allowed to go to Moora college. I quote —

... it ... does not sound like a wise idea to me to have the member for North West Central visiting primary schools.

...

I cannot be clearer: I would not allow the member for North West Central to visit primary schools.

Mr W.J. Johnston: What is wrong with that?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: As a father of five children, for my family to hear—the member can read anything he wants into it—what the Premier was trying to intimate back then was absolutely outrageous and shows the type of person this Premier is.

The Leader of the Opposition wrote to the Speaker and the Premier, and of course the backtracking began: "The reason why I said that I can't have him going to primary schools is because he changed sides." Really! We have to stand here on a day-to-day basis and hear personal attacks by the Premier. The fish stinks from the head down, and the head is the Premier! People like the member for Armadale, the member for Cannington and the member for Bassendean try to mimic what the Premier does. It is not honourable. It is not what this place is all about. The Premier, in his attitude towards this place, is dictatorial.

It is announcements with no detail. We have just heard the announcement of \$1.9 billion for the health system. The health system is in crisis. We hear about the amount of money that goes to housing. Housing in this state is in crisis. It is in crisis, members. We hear these funding announcements, but with no detail and no action. The government has missed the boat with the health and housing systems. The government cannot claw that back by making announcements. It will take years to claw back what the government has done to the health and housing systems in Western Australia.

I will talk about what just happened with the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill. The issue here, members, is that the Labor Party went to the election with a draft bill by Hon Ben Wyatt, the former member for Victoria Park and former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, but the bill we have now has 100 clauses that are different. We got that bill at the eleventh hour—5.10 pm on a Tuesday—and had a briefing on the overview at lunchtime. We had to debate it the next day, on the Wednesday. The bill has 260 pages and 353 clauses. There were 100 changes from the draft bill the Labor Party took to the election. Aboriginal organisations and communities are outraged. On the member for Kimberley's patch, the Kimberley Land Council has rightfully said that it has not been consulted. Banjima elder Slim Parker has not been consulted. The government has brought in legislation that no-one has seen that will change the landscape and the way that this place operates. Why? It is because the legislation is being rushed through. There is a lack of detail. We are working it out. The guidelines will be co-designed afterwards. When did that come in? I know when; it was when this Labor government took power in 2017. The government has changed the way that this process in this place works—allowing the opposition to scrutinise legislation.

The government has another bill that it said would—I am glad the member for Cannington is in the chamber because he was part of this move—protect subcontractors. It was a policy the Labor government took to the 2017 election. The government's own report said that the legislation should have cascading trusts —

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Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister!

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It said the legislation should have cascading trusts to protect subcontractors.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister!

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The minister does not like hearing it. That is why he is yelling out. He is squealing over there—a little squeal. He does not like the truth—squeal away.

Mr W.J. Johnston: There he is dishonest again. Every day another dishonesty—another Liberal lie.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Labor members went to the election saying that they would protect subcontractors. What happened after that? We have seen company after company go bankrupt under the government's watch —

Mr W.J. Johnston: Another Liberal lie.

Withdrawal of Remark

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent): Minister, you cannot call the member dishonest. Can you retract it, please?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I withdraw.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you.

Debate Resumed

Mr V.A. CATANIA: But we all know the member for Cannington lied to the people of Western Australia about subcontractors, because he promised to protect them and he did not!

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The member cannot do exactly what the Acting Speaker instructed me not to do. I cannot see how the member for North West Central can do what you said I should not do. If I can withdraw without hesitation, I would appreciate if he was asked to do the same.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent): I am sorry I did not hear what was said.

Several members interjected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Therefore, if you did not hear what he said, he will confirm that he said that I lied in the community and that I told a lie. He will confirm that and that is on the *Hansard*. So given that he said that, he is obliged to withdraw.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for North West Central, can you please withdraw that comment?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I withdraw.

Debate Resumed

Mr V.A. CATANIA: As I said, the government went to the election in 2017 promising to protect subcontractors. It did not do that.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It ignored its own report and draft legislation.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister!

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The government misled every subcontractor in this state, and they will not forget.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister! I will call you to order.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Of course, the minister does not care because he is retiring as well. We all know that he is jumping ship at the next election. Here we go.

Ms S. Winton interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Wanneroo!

Mr V.A. CATANIA: When it came to lockdowns, the government made these announcements that these businesses were going to get the funds needed.

Several members interjected.

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The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you. Please think of Hansard.

Ms S. Winton interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Wanneroo!

Mr V.A. CATANIA: When we had the lockdowns, the Premier came out and made an announcement, after being pushed and shoved to support those businesses financially, but the businesses did not receive the money until months and months afterwards. Yet again, it was an announcement with no detail. The criteria applied to only a select few. What we saw then is happening now after tropical cyclone Seroja. We keep hearing that this is the biggest investment ever. It was a pretty bloody big cyclone that caused a huge amount of damage! The government made all these announcements, yet the \$20 000 grants came out only a couple of weeks ago. We still have not seen accommodation for the workers—the people who need to rebuild Kalbarri—which is what the government promised.

Point of Order

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I seek your guidance, Acting Speaker. Given that the motion relates to matters inside Parliament and the member is now raising something that is not related to any business of the house, I wonder whether you could let me know whether that is relevant to the motion.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent): I think the member is talking about the latter part of the motion. There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Mr V.A. CATANIA: There you are. Kalbarri is trying to rebuild. It was promised accommodation for the tradies, but there has been nothing. The government sent up, I think, member for Moore, eight or nine or maybe 11 caravans.

Mr R.S. Love: Eleven caravans.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Eleven caravans. Firstly, they were not registered. The government made the announcement, and then months after, it came up with caravans that were not registered. I think Kalbarri may have two of those.

Mr R.S. Love: They looked pretty in the yard for about seven weeks.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: There you go. We have this smoke and mirrors that this government is all about. It is about spin. That is why it has all these spin doctors. That is why the government resorts to personal attacks. It does not like to be questioned inside or outside this place. That is what companies tell us. They are fearful of the government's behaviour and retribution if they speak out. In actual fact, if companies have issues, they are told by ministers and government members who come to my electorate that if they go to the local member—me—they will not help them. They are told that the government will not fund them if they go to the local member. Let me tell members that that is what they say. They tried, but they failed to beat me. And that hurts—I know it hurts. I am still here trying to keep account of what they are doing or not doing. The smoke and mirrors and the spin that comes from this government is amazing. Ministers and members do not provide any notice to opposition members that they are coming to their electorates. It is a matter of protocol. It is a matter of just showing decency in the job. But they cannot even do that.

As I said, the fish stinks from the head down, and the Premier stinks. We have the Minister for Police and the way that he responds to crime that is out of control in our regional communities, like Fitzroy Crossing and Carnarvon. What he had to say is an absolute disgrace.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mr V.A. CATANIA: When we have got —

Several members interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: When the member for Bassendean walked across this chamber in the last term and feigned a headbutt to the Leader of the Opposition —

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: That matter was investigated by the Parliament and that allegation was shown not to be true. I am not quite sure why the member is doing this again. He made that allegation. It was investigated by the Parliament and shown not to be true.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms K.E. Giddens): Excuse me! While I hear the point of order, there will be no interjections.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The actual conclusion was that there was insufficient evidence.

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The ACTING SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Several members interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I saw it happen.

The ACTING SPEAKER: No, no, no. I am ruling on a point of order. Please take your seat.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The member for North West Central just made an allegation that the member for Bassendean breached the rules of Parliament. He can do that only by substantive motion. He cannot stand in the chamber and make a false allegation against another member. If he wants to do that, he should suspend this matter and bring in the matter about the member for Bassendean, and then we will deal with it. But he cannot do it like this. This is grubby and deceitful behaviour.

The ACTING SPEAKER: That is a personal reflection. It is disorderly. Can you withdraw that comment?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Sorry; withdraw which comment?

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Withdraw unreservedly.

Several members interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Okay. I withdraw.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Hang on, what's he withdrawing, Acting Speaker?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I do not have to explain. I withdraw.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I am going to begin to call members to order. I have sat here so far and allowed a certain amount of interjection. It is becoming unruly and I will not sit over an unruly house. There will be warnings given. My patience has now run out. Withdraw the comment and the imputation that you made in regard to the minister on this side, and then please return to the point of this motion.

Debate Resumed

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

Dr A.D. Buti: You haven't withdrawn it.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I withdrew it before, thank you very much!

Several members interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Can I continue, please?

The ACTING SPEAKER: You may continue.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: During that period, the Premier was asked a question about what happened in the chamber at the time, and the Premier's response was, "I didn't see it, so it didn't happen."

Mr W.J. Johnston: That's not what he said.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: "I didn't see it, so it didn't happen"—that was the response of the Premier at the time. That just shows the point that we are trying to make: the arrogance, the dismissive and bullish approach, and the personal attacks from the Premier and his apparatchiki who are trying to emulate the Premier to win favours to be ministers.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The ones who have been pushed to the side are the ones who often sit there and tell the truth because they have been pushed to the side by the Premier. They were very good ministers, but to keep the factional process going in the party, they had to miss out. As I said, we have now got all the Premier's comments —

Ms S.E. Winton: He's run out of puff.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: What actually hurts? Member for Wanneroo, you tell me if this is sound. We have the Cleo situation, when the Premier flew up to Carnarvon on the morning after they found Cleo. Here we had a little girl, four years of age, in a room with a stranger, surrounded by her dolls. The Premier, a stranger, went to visit that little girl and brought teddy bears.

Mr R.R. Whitby: Careful.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I question the motives for that visit, because that little girl still had not been seen by police to find out what happened until the afternoon.

Mr R.R. Whitby: You don't know what you're talking about.

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Mr V.A. CATANIA: I know exactly what I am talking about.

I find it absolutely concerning that the Premier would do that. I do not mind the Premier visiting, but that was the wrong point in time to go and visit. A strange male going after —

Mr R.R. Whitby: The police would know more than you, mate.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I question the motives of the Premier, because we know that the Premier is all about spin. He is all about the Premier. He does not care about you guys. He does not care about his ministers. He is all about Premier Mark McGowan. That is the way he operates. There is no plan for the state. When we look at tourism and what other states and countries are doing to ensure that they can kickstart tourism and get people to go there, we can see that we will miss the boat because there is no plan. The government will not put up its hand for the Commonwealth Games to give the city an injection of what it needs, and that is people in 2026. Why is the Premier not advocating to get as many events as possible so that we can continue the so-called high that members opposite say we have? I admit that it is a high, but not in the hotels or businesses in the Perth CBD. They are suffering. Whether they can survive is another matter. That is why we need to look ahead to the future. We need to look at the Commonwealth Games and at what other opportunities we may have to attract events to our great state.

The question I asked the Premier today was: what financial support has the government put in place for those businesses that may be caught up in the regional boundaries that are drawn up because the vaccination rates in regional WA are very poor?

[Member's time extended.]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Why are the vaccination rates very poor? The Auditor General highlighted it. We always see the Labor government blame the federal government. We know it is because the federal election is around the corner. This federal government has done more for Western Australia than ever before in terms of the GST and the money it has put into infrastructure around the state. It is huge. The state government will, at any opportunity, blame the federal government for its own processes. Who does the government blame for the health crisis? The government blames the pandemic. We have not had the pandemic here.

Dr A.D. Buti: Why not?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Do we have COVID rampant in our communities?

Dr A.D. Buti: Why don't we have it?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Why do we not have the world's best health system? Why do we have a housing crisis? These are the questions that the Premier needs to answer. Why has he let the health system fall into a state of disrepair? We cannot repair it at present, because it will take years to claw back the lack of investment that the government has neglected to put into the health system. It is the same with public housing. What is really concerning is the press conferences that have been happening for nearly two years. The Premier uses public servants to stand next to him and validate what he says. That is a concern. The government is using public servants to validate what the government says. We have heard a lot of spin. It is political. The Premier is making public servants, be it the Commissioner of Police or the head of the Department of Health, stand next to him to validate the decisions that he has made without showing any of the health advice. The government will not conduct any inquiries and it will not let committees assess the actions of the government. A pretty normal process in the Parliament of Western Australia involves enabling committees to provide that check and balance of government departments. Yet that is not happening. The government controls every committee in this house.

If the government has confidence in the decisions it makes, it should welcome any scrutiny.

Mr W.J. Johnston: We do.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The government does not because it rushes through legislation and it stops referrals to committees that look at legislation in more depth. This is what the government does. It avoids scrutiny; it does not respond to questions; it does not give notice of legislation; and it does not consult. We hear the language of this government. It says, "We're a government making decisions." Let me tell members that is what the public fear! The Labor Party went to the election saying that there would be no electoral reform, and it changed the voting process. It went to the election promising to protect subcontractors, and it did not. It went to the election saying that there would be an opportunity under the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Amendment Bill to appeal decisions made by the minister. The government took that out of the legislation—in fact, it made 100 changes.

I say to members opposite—members of the Labor Party—that the actions they are not taking speak louder than their words. The government talks about closing the gap. Its talks about protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage, yet the legislation does the complete opposite. We have a movement starting in Western Australia. The government said that it would deliver on those commitments. Suddenly, it is starting to add up. That is why the member for Cannington,

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the member for Mandurah and the member for Bunbury will retire. The member for Baldy will like that because that is how he climbs to the top!

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members, the member for North West Central has repeatedly sought interjections and repeatedly invited them by asking questions, but it is difficult for Hansard. It is with Hansard in mind that I ask you to please ignore the member's invitation for interjections. Member for North West Central, I ask you to direct your comments through the chair.

Ms S. Winton interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Wanneroo, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: We are seeing a total transformation of how Parliament operates. That is what this government is doing. The government has such a glass jaw that it reacts to any scrutiny by making personal attacks and threatening industry and people in my electorate if they do not go the way that the Labor Party wants them to go. That is a concern. That is when people in the community say, "Whoa, whoa! I think we need a bit more balance in this absolute majority that we've given the Labor Party." That will come in 2025. In fact, bring on the election in 12 months and will see how that goes! Members opposite have some good, honest people, but do not be influenced by the fish head that stinks. That is the Premier. We all know —

Withdrawal of Remark

Dr A.D. BUTI: I think referring to a member of Parliament in those terms is a personal slur and should be withdrawn.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms K.E. Giddens): I will rule that disorderly. Can you withdraw the comment?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I withdraw.

Debate Resumed

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The point I am trying to make is that the fish stinks from the head down. Members opposite, do not fall into that trap. We all know what the Premier is like. I know what members opposite all think of him. They did not really like him prior to 2017. In fact, I remember when they tried to get rid of him and the member for Cannington led the charge!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for North West Central.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: He instigated former Minister for Defence Stephen Smith —

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The member for Cannington led the charge; I forgot about that!

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for North West Central, I have asked you to direct your comments through the chair.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The member for Cannington led the charge to get rid of the then Leader of the Opposition.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister for Mines and Petroleum, I am very close to calling you to order.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: He does not like the truth.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for North West Central.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is quite serious when we have legislation with no detail being rushed through. The personal insults and the way members opposite are behaving with interest groups and industry is really starting to shape what people think of them; that is, as a dictatorial government because they are using their numbers to change the way the voting system works and how this place operates. That is what dictators do—change the way people vote and change the way they are scrutinised in Parliament. Look at the definition —

Dr A.D. Buti: Democracy decided the last election.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: There is no democracy. That has been lost and it has become a dictatorial government. That is what people are saying.

Ms S.E. Winton: What people? Who are you talking to?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is the people of Western Australia who are now waking up to the fact that the government said it would keep us safe and strong, but we have a health crisis that will not be able to cope with an outbreak of COVID-19, particularly in regional Western Australia. We will hear more tomorrow about the state of the health

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system in regional Western Australia. We have a crime problem that the government will not address. It will not address the housing crisis. The government is all about spin—all about the headline without any substance. We hear the announcements without any action being taken. The people of Western Australia are waking up to what this government is all about and members opposite have just confirmed it over the last couple of days.

We are here to make decisions. I would have thought that if there is a mandate for the policies that the government set out prior to the election, that is all very well, but the government is now introducing legislation that was not part of its election campaign, not to mention closing down the forestry industry down in the south west. Members opposite do not have a mandate to do those things. That is when people start to think, “Hang on a second, it is becoming a dictatorial government; the government is making decisions, but without our approval.” To members opposite and those new ministers, the ones who are retiring should give them some good advice. That is to stay true to yourself and do not get caught up in the spin, personal attacks and vitriol that the leader throws at members on this side and now out to the community.

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Mines and Petroleum) [6.23 pm]: I am always amused by the member for North West Central lecturing people about fidelity to their promises because I was the state secretary of the Labor Party when the member for North West Central, not once but twice, signed a pledge to serve in this Parliament as a Labor member of Parliament. He now comes in here —

Point of Order

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I cannot see under standing order 78 how this is relevant to the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms K.E. Giddens): There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The member for North West Central went on for 30 minutes talking about people’s integrity, and when I point out the basic element of the integrity of the member opposite, he gets to his feet to object. I am just looking for his inaugural speech, which I have downloaded onto my phone. I really love his inaugural speech. In the last line of his inaugural speech in this chamber he said that we do not need royalties for regions because the Labor Party looks after country. I agreed with his inaugural speech. He made comments of integrity. Unfortunately, he has walked away from that integrity, and he now sits there as the person whom nobody in the Parliament has any respect for. This is what he forgets. The Liberal members do not give him respect, but even his own party does not give him respect. Nobody in this chamber holds this member with any respect at all. That is one of the problems.

Point of Order

Mr R.S. LOVE: I cannot see any relevance of this line of debate that the minister is leading at the moment to the motion that the Leader of the Opposition has brought to the house. Madam Acting Speaker, I ask you to bring it back to the motion.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms K.E. Giddens): There is no point of order, but I will ask the minister to continue with the motion. Thank you.

Debate Resumed

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Sure. I am just making the point. This is a motion about abuse of power and manipulating parliamentary processes. That is what has been talked about. That is what members opposite came in here for. We are talking about manipulating parliamentary processes. Imagine someone getting elected saying that they would support the Labor Party and then ratting on the Labor Party and ratting on the signature that they themselves put on a document that said they would serve as a Labor member. In fact, the document goes further. It says that if they do not serve as a Labor member, they have to pay for the cost of the election for their replacement.

Mr V.A. Catania: But you didn’t spend anything on mine.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: That is interesting. The member called out, “Not that you spent anything on mine.” Of course, he knows that I gave him a \$3 000 cheque from my campaign account to cover off the unmet demand, the campaign material that he himself had ordered from the party office and did not pay. That was actually reported in *The Australian* at the time that he defected from the Labor side to the National side.

Mr V.A. Catania: Do you want to say that outside the chamber?

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for North West Central!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I am happy to say it outside the chamber because it is not a defamatory comment.

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, minister! Member for North West Central, I ask you to cease the interjections. If you have a point of order, raise it. If you do not, cease the interjections.

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Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Shane Love

Point of Order

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Point of order, Madam Acting Speaker. The member for Cannington is casting aspersions on my character and making false accusations about money, and you are saying that I have to be silent? How about you ask him to go to standing order 78 and actually be relevant on the motion that has been put forward?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms K.E. Giddens): There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: As I said, the member spent 28 minutes talking about integrity and the motion itself talks about integrity. It talks about abuse of power. Abuse of power is a question of integrity. I am just making the point that we should judge the member for North West Central, not by my standards but by his standards. When we do that judgement, we find that he does not meet the standards that he says should be implemented. As I say, that is why the member for North West Central is so lonely in this place.

I want to thank the member for North West Central because we would not have industrial manslaughter legislation in Western Australia if it were not for him. The member for North West Central approached me in the lobby of the Parliament to say that he thought he could get the Nationals WA across the line to support industrial manslaughter legislation, and I actually thanked him in the chamber in my third reading speech as we were passing the industrial manslaughter legislation. I want to congratulate him. I am no longer the Minister for Industrial Relations, but I make that point. The other day, the member for Roe, I think it was, asked the Minister for Emergency Services a question about the impact of the work health and safety legislation on volunteer firefighters. I make the point that the reason those impacts are there is that the member for North West Central engineered to get the National Party to support the legislation.

I want to thank him for that, and say that whenever a National Party member asks these questions, they should first turn to the member for North West Central because he will explain that the National Party facilitated that legislation through the Parliament.

I am proud that the Labor Party brought the legislation in. But of course we did not have control of the upper house. Until the 2021 election, the Labor Party never held control of the upper house. That made us unique, because, generally, since World War II, two parties have formed government—the Liberal Party with either the National Party or the then Country Party, and the Labor Party. They have been the governments ever since World War II. Up until this year, only the Liberal Party and the National Party have had control of the upper house when they were in government.

That is an important element to consider. That meant that the only legislation that we could get through in the last Parliament was the legislation that the Liberal Party and the National Party or some of those crossbenchers would support. We could not get our agenda through. We had to compromise all the time to get our agenda through. That was not true during the time of the Barnett Liberal–National government, because it had control of both houses. The member for North West Central, with this pretend indignation that he has, says, “Oh, well, the government would not refer a bill to a committee.” Tell me: can any member guess how many times in the eight years of the Liberal–National Barnett government it agreed to refer a bill to a committee? I can tell the member it was zero. I know that, because I often stood as an opposition member to move that a bill be referred to a committee. Zero. It never happened. The member for North West Central laments the fact that there is not a majority on any parliamentary committee in the Assembly. There is a reason that is the case. It is because that would mean that the opposition would need to have all its members on just two committees. The opposition actually has no member on one of the committees. We have five Labor members on one committee. That is because the opposition has not brought forward any member for that committee. The opposition then criticises us for the fact that it does not have members on a committee. That is just bizarre. Which world do you live in, member? It does not make any sense.

The opposition used some tabled report from the Auditor General and said we are not being transparent. The Auditor General is part of the methodology of transparency. That is why the Labor Party introduced these transparency mechanisms. That is why the Labor Party appointed the current Auditor General. That is why the Labor Party introduced the idea of an Ombudsman to review administrative decisions of government. That was introduced by the Labor Party. We are the party of accountability. The fact is that we have been honest not just with the community; we have been honest with our electors as well.

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale — Minister for Finance) [6.32 pm]: I would like to make a contribution to this debate that has been brought on by the opposition. They talk about question time and that we do not answer questions. I have now been in this Parliament for 11 and a bit years. I have never seen an opposition that is so inept at framing its questions, and then, 99 per cent of the time, their follow-up supplementary questions have no relevance to the main question. They do not listen to the answer that has been given; they just go ahead with what has been written down by their researchers or themselves. It is absolutely farcical for the opposition to criticise the way we answer

Ms Mia Davies; Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Tony Buti; Acting Speaker; Mr David Templeman;
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questions. We can only answer the questions that are put to us, and nine out of 10 times their questions are farcical, and their supplementaries have no relevance.

I turn now to the “Comment for Hire”, also known as the member for Vasse. She has a comment on everything. Her comment on the AFL grand final was very misplaced. She said we had spent millions of dollars to obtain the rights. We spent zilch. But that did not stop her from going on 6PR Radio and saying that we spent millions of dollars. We gave \$250 000 towards the half-time entertainment. To obtain the grand final here, we did not spend a cent. The reason the grand final was held here was because of the COVID-19 management of this government. I know it is hard for the opposition to understand or admit it, but that is what happened. What does the member for Vasse do? She asks a question and 99.9 per cent of the time it is to the Minister for Health. She does not actually listen to his answer because she is always on the phone while he is giving a response. She then has a follow-up question that nine times out of 10 he has already answered in the main answer. It is just appalling!

The members for North West Central and Cottesloe say that we do not accept criticism or allow for scrutiny of a bill. The member for North West Central talked about the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill that was brought on for debate last week. We debated it most of Wednesday and all day Thursday, besides grievances, question time and for maybe half an hour. We debated it into the evening last night. The opposition, of which, I will say, the members for North West Central and Cottesloe were the only two who were really involved, had the weekend to look at the legislation. They had Friday and Monday, but they came back to this house without really having looked at the bill over those four days, because during consideration in detail yesterday, they were flicking through pages trying to find the next clause to look at: “Oh, yes, we’ll do that one there.” Members opposite had time over the weekend to research and study, but they did not do it. It would not have mattered how much time we had given them to study the bill, they would not have put the hard yards in and spent time examining and researching it. That is what we did in opposition; we went away and we researched, but they do not do that.

During the second reading debate on the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill 2021 —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members! The Minister for Finance —

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Moore! The Minister for Finance is not inviting interjections. Cease!

Dr A.D. BUTI: During the second reading debate when all the members of the opposition spoke, they were teasing and galling the member for Kimberley: “Oh, we’re waiting to hear from you, member for Kimberley. What have you got to say, member for Kimberley? Oh, member for Kimberley, I know about your community. When are we going to hear from the member for Kimberley?” The member for Kimberley got up and you should have seen their faces. They were hiding. They did not want to look because she did one of the greatest speeches —

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for North West Central, I call you to order for the first time! I have been very clear with my instruction and I will begin to call further members who interject.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Thank you, Acting Speaker.

It was one of the greatest speeches that I have heard in the 11 years of my time in Parliament.

Ms D.G. D’Anna: And I wrote it, by the way, for those who thought I didn’t. Yes—I heard that people thought that I didn’t.

Several members interjected.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Rubbish! You were all teasing her and galling the member for Kimberley to speak. You thought she was not going to speak or that she was going to criticise. But the member for Kimberley made an outstanding speech and you were all embarrassed. You were embarrassed.

Point of Order

Mr R.S. LOVE: Point of order, Acting Speaker.

Dr A.D. BUTI: How can there be a point of order on that?

Mr R.S. LOVE: It is because the minister was saying that I was teasing the member for Kimberley. I was not in the chamber when she made her speech.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms K.E. Giddens): There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Ms Mia Davies; Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Tony Buti; Acting Speaker; Mr David Templeman;
Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Shane Love

Dr A.D. BUTI: When members opposite spoke during the second reading debate, they all made a particular reference to the member for Kimberley. Why? Why would they do that?

Mr V.A. Catania: Because the KLC, which is the Kimberley Land Council, is vehemently opposed to this legislation.

Dr A.D. BUTI: It was not last year, though. The point is that the member for Kimberley got up and she put you in your place.

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for North West Central!

Dr A.D. BUTI: Then in the debate, the member for North West Central mentioned “1 100 square metres” 37 times. The member for Cottesloe mentioned it 14 times. They were obsessed by the 1 100-square-metre issue in the bill. If they had actually known the current bill, they would have understood that there is no size restriction. They were trying to argue that this was imposing —

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for North West Central, I have called you to order once. I will not hesitate to do it again. Consider that my generous reminder.

Dr A.D. BUTI: They were trying to imply that this bill would be an onerous task for people who have landholdings of 1 100 square metres or more, when at the moment they can have 200 square metres and fall under the current legislation. What was even worse was the member for Cottesloe’s use of the word “mob”. Although the member for North West Central flip-flops and tries to back both sides, he at least has a history of showing interest in Aboriginal issues; I grant him that. Unfortunately, the member for Cottesloe has shown no interest in Aboriginal issues, and his contribution to the debate was appalling.

Mr V.A. Catania: Member, I use that term quite often, but —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member, there was no invitation for an interjection.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I am not asking for an interjection.

He did not just say “mob”, and I was not referring to the member for North West Central. The member for Cottesloe used the word when we were debating the issue of Aboriginal inspectors who can co-opt other inspectors to help them. He said, “This could result in a wild mob in the community.” What was he implying? When I asked him, “Why would you say ‘mob’?”, he replied, “What, are you saying I’m racist?” I never used the word “racist”, but he knows it is connected and that the term was used in a negative manner against Aboriginal people. Shame on him; absolute shame on him. When people read the debate on the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill 2021 in years to come and read the member for Cottesloe’s words and questioning, I think they will form a very dim view of him.

After the member decided in his contribution to the third reading debate to indulge in a personal attack, I could have responded in kind in my reply, but I thought the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill 2021 was too important for that, so I did not, but I can now. His questioning was absolutely appalling. He was hardly ever concerned about Aboriginal cultural heritage in his questioning; it was all about the landowners and how hard it was going to be for them. When we debated the issue of the inspectors, we saw that the powers in the bill are no greater or lesser than those in two or three other pieces of legislation, including the Biodiversity Conservation Act, which was passed by a conservative government. It is also no different from the powers under the Heritage Act. It is apparently okay for an inspector to have those powers to protect non-Aboriginal cultural heritage; no problem. The member for Cottesloe does not complain about that, but he complains when we want to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage. Shame on the member for Cottesloe, and I wish he was here; I really wish he was here. He will go down in history for his contribution to the debate on that legislation.

My criticism of the member for North West Central is that he was trying to play politics by taking both sides, but that is nothing compared with what the member for Cottesloe did. It was absolutely disgraceful. Yes, inspectors can have those powers when it comes to wildlife, and they can have those powers when it comes to non-Aboriginal cultural heritage, but we dare not give Aboriginal inspectors that power —

Point of Order

Mr R.S. LOVE: We have this continued attack on a member of Parliament for contributions that he may or may not have made. The minister had an opportunity in his reply to the third reading debate to comment on that. I think this is disrespectful, disingenuous, and does not reflect the content of the motion before the house to discuss today.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms K.E. Giddens): The motion is very broad, and it goes to parliamentary processes and prioritising the needs of Western Australians. On that basis, I find no point of order. The Minister for Finance has the call.

Ms Mia Davies; Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Tony Buti; Acting Speaker; Mr David Templeman;
Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Shane Love

Debate Resumed

Dr A.D. BUTI: Today the member for Cottesloe referred to Peter Law as being a very credible journalist, and I totally agree. He is the main political journalist for the main newspaper in Western Australia, *The West Australian*. No argument from me; he is a very good cricket player, too! Obviously, one takes note when Peter Law writes an article. I refer to an article in *The West Australian* of 29 July 2021, “Where exactly is ‘Dr Who’?” The article states —

There was a rumour on the radio a few months ago that Liberal staffers were being asked to refer to MPs by their honorifics.

In the case of WA Liberal leader David Honey, that would be “Dr Honey” thanks to his PhD in chemistry at the University of Western Australia.

But Honey, the party’s fourth leader in four years, has picked up another moniker: Doctor Who.

...

If Honey believes that the public perceives the Government as failing and that affluent electorates will just swing back at the next State poll in 2025, then he is delusional.

He is a very credible journalist, as the member for Cottesloe said today. I totally agree. The article also states —

What no one can understand is why Honey handed himself a suite of dull but worthy portfolios—State development, energy, hydrogen, science, innovation and ICT—that means he is rarely in demand from the media.

That is certainly true. “Comment for Hire”, also known as the member for Vasse, is always in the media for the Liberal Party. I know the member for Cottesloe is called the Leader of the Opposition, but really that is just a name. He has no power. In many respects, it is quite sad.

Point of Order

Mr R.S. LOVE: It is also erroneous. The Leader of the Opposition is the member for Central Wheatbelt.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Okay. Exactly right. He is the so-called Leader of the Liberal Party

Debate Resumed

Dr A.D. BUTI: It is quite pathetic. He knows that “The Clan” on WhatsApp, in the two powerbrokers, Hon Peter Collier and Hon Nick Goiran, said he was a joke. But he has not had the temerity, the courage or the strength to go to the media and stare them down. That is what a strong leader would do. He would stare them down. The only time he gets up is when we refer to Hon Nick Goiran. He stands at the defence of Hon Nick Goiran, who thinks he is a joke. That shows how pathetic he is. He knows that his leadership depends on the support of Hon Nick Goiran. He will allow Hon Nick Goiran to make a joke about him, but he will still get up and defend him.

He will defend Hon Nick Goiran, but he will not get up and defend the Premier of WA against personal attacks by anti-vaxxers. He will not make a comment out there in the public. Why did you not bring a motion to the Parliament tonight to stand together against those threats that the Premier received on the weekend about being beheaded—him and his family? That is what you should have brought to the Parliament today, not this silly motion you have brought on. You should have been standing here as one with the Premier against the threats he has received—that his family has received and his staff. He has had to close his office because of the threats his staff have received. You have been silent. I think the Leader of the Opposition has made some comments, and the member for Vasse made a slight comment in Parliament today that these comments were terrible. Why do you not go out there in public? You are doing what Prime Minister Morrison does—dog whistling, pretending you are on one side and going on the other, giving comfort to the anti-vaxxers and giving comfort to those people who go to freedom marches. Why would you have a freedom march in WA? It is unbelievable.

Point of Order

Mr R.S. LOVE: Surely we cannot listen to this discussion all night long. It has no relevance whatsoever to the motion that has been brought to the house, and it is in fact erroneous.

Dr A.D. Buti: Erroneous—I don’t think so.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Claiming that the opposition has not stood by the Premier is not true. We have actually made comment.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms K.E. Giddens): I am going to rule on the point of order. I have heard your point of order.

Ms S. Winton interjected.

Ms Mia Davies; Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Tony Buti; Acting Speaker; Mr David Templeman;
Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Shane Love

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order, member for Wanneroo! As I have already noted, this is a broad motion; the Minister for Finance, in my opinion, is addressing that motion, and he has the call.

Debate Resumed

Dr A.D. BUTI: It is abuse of the parliamentary process and an abuse of their responsibility as a member of Parliament for members not to stand and defend threats against any member of Parliament. Opposition members basically have been silent on this issue. Where are they? Where are their Facebook posts? Where are all their Twitter posts? Why are they not standing in front of the media? Why has there not been a joint media conference with the Liberal and National Parties on the steps of Parliament denouncing the behaviour of the anti-vaxxers? You have been silent; you have been moot. It is a disgrace! There have been threats by these anti-vaxxers —

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I am not asking for interjections, Acting Speaker.

Mr R.S. Love: Don't say things in the house that are not completely true!

The ACTING SPEAKER: That is not open for debate; thank you, member for Roe.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I tell you what is not a lie, member for Moore: you have not done a press conference standing as one, as a group of National–Liberal Party members, out the front denouncing the anti-vaxxers or denouncing the threats to the Premier.

Mr D.R. Michael: Would you stand for the Liberal Party? Seriously!

Dr A.D. BUTI: No; that is right.

One would think that the threats against the Premier, particularly the ones on the weekend, which came out yesterday —
Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members! I do apologise, member for Moore, that I did wrongly name you as the member for Roe. Member for Moore, please cease the interjections.

Dr A.D. BUTI: In my 11 years in this house I have not experienced the threats against any political member that the Premier has had to endure due to the anti-vaxxers and the so-called freedom march people. There have hardly been any lockdowns in WA, so it is hard to know what they are arguing about, but anyway—so be it. Then they come in and ask questions. This is where the dog whistling of the Prime Minister comes in. They come in and ask questions: “Oh, due to the mandate policy, what will happen if we don't have enough teachers?” But they have not said whether they believe in mandatory vaccination. Do they believe in it? Do they support it? I do not know. I do not hear it. I have not heard them say it in Parliament. Of course there will be difficult decisions. The government made a decision that we need to have mandatory vaccination. It is not mandatory in the sense that people will be physically compelled to do it; they have a choice. It is basically a condition of employment. We have conditions of employment for everything. Teachers have to have a teacher's registration; it is just a condition of employment. Why do they not come out and say where they stand on it? Or will they say what the Prime Minister said: “I can understand their frustrations”? Is that what they are going to say? I must say that I am absolutely amazed that the opposition has not come out loud and clear to denounce the threats that the Premier and his family have received.

Mr R.S. Love: You're not listening then, are you?

Dr A.D. BUTI: And his staff.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Moore, I call you for the first time.

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Excuse me!

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Moore, you were called to order for the first time. Member for North West Central, you are called to order for the second time.

Dr A.D. BUTI: The member for Moore would say I am not listening. What do you mean I am not listening? I have not heard the member for Moore once in this Parliament denounce the attacks against the Premier. If he wants to bring me *Hansard* tomorrow to show me, okay, I will stand up and apologise. When have you got up and denounced them in Parliament?

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Ms Mia Davies; Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Tony Buti; Acting Speaker; Mr David Templeman;
Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Shane Love

Dr A.D. BUTI: You haven't done it in a press conference. You have not done it!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister for Finance! I have given very clear instructions and warnings throughout this last 50 minutes. Member for Moore, you are called to order for the second time.

Point of Order

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The Minister for Finance is baiting the opposition to get a response by accusing us of not doing something that we have done through the Leader of the Opposition. The member for Moore was called to order when the Minister for Finance accused the opposition of something the opposition has not done; that is, stood by the so-called anti-vaxxers or stood either side.

Ms S. Winton interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Wanneroo!

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is simply not true.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms K.E. Giddens): There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Dr A.D. BUTI: Could I seek an extension of time, please?

[Member's time extended.]

Dr A.D. BUTI: As we head towards the end of the parliamentary year, I have a couple of things to raise. I do not know whether this is the member for North West Central's new ploy, but he keeps saying that this member or that minister is going to retire.

Ms C.M. Rowe: It's ageist.

Dr A.D. BUTI: If the member for Belmont remembers, in the last term of Parliament, the member for North West Central, the former member for Darling Range, the former Leader of the Opposition and the former member for Churchlands day after day would point at us and say, "You are not going to be here. You are not going to be here. You are not going to be here." Out of that gang, the only member who is back is the member for North West Central.

Ms S.E. Winton: And just.

Dr A.D. BUTI: And just—the others are gone. Now the member is announcing a new wave of retirements, but we will wait to see what happens. Members of the opposition do not have to worry about retirement because they get booted out. We have really got to feel sorry for the member for Cottesloe because he is surrounded by a sea of red. His only hope is to dive into the Indian Ocean and head out west. Where would he land? Rottnest Island. Who is the member for Rottnest Island? It is the member for Fremantle! He cannot escape a sea of red.

The other day I mentioned that the member for Cottesloe is the Rip Van Winkle of Western Australian politics. He fell asleep in about 1975, as colour television was being introduced to WA and Sir Charles Court was the leader. Although I thought many of his actions on Indigenous issues were appalling, no-one can doubt that he has been a strong leader. The member went to sleep in about 1975 and woke up after the 2021 state election and found, "Gee, I am now the Leader of the Liberal Party, but I am not the Leader of the Opposition." The sectarian agrarian socialist party, also known as the Nats, which rhymes with rats, which is very appropriate because it has the member for North West Central in its ranks, is the opposition. The Nationals WA is the opposition; it is just amazing. He wakes up to that. He also wakes up to find that there is a thing called WhatsApp. He finds out about "The Clan" and that it had been discussing what a joke he is and that his preselection was a joke. He has no semblance of self-respect. How could he stand up and constantly defend Hon Nick Goiran, when he knows that Hon Nick Goiran thinks he is a joke? Surely he has to have some self-respect. He has to place his leadership on it and denounce it. He has to be a strong leader and come out against Nick Goiran and Peter Collier, but he will not do that. That is quite appalling.

I will tell you one thing, Acting Speaker, it is most appalling that the opposition is not standing up and speaking out loud and strong, not just in whispers, against the anti-vaxxers and the threats against the Premier. The opposition has not done that. That is an absolute disgrace and the opposition wears that. The members for North West Central and Cottesloe can go on and say that we are arrogant and do not make decisions. The fact is that governments are elected to lead, and that is what we are doing.

Mr V.A. Catania: What about the leak?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Member for North West Central —

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

Ms Mia Davies; Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Tony Buti; Acting Speaker; Mr David Templeman;
Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Shane Love

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister for Finance, thank you. You are on two warnings, member for North West Central. We have limited time left, but it is probably enough still to get to four.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Member for North West Central, when you referred to “the leak”, what were you referring to?

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister for Finance, are you inviting an interjection?

Mr V.A. Catania: Those leaks that came out of the caucus room or people taking photos —

Dr A.D. BUTI: Okay, member for North West Central, if you want to go down this rabbit hole —

Mr V.A. Catania: I know that you were accused wrongly.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yes. That is where I would stop if I were you, okay. I do not want bring in other family members, so just stop.

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Just stop. I do not want to bring in other family members that know something.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members, thank you. Minister for Finance, thank you. Members, I would suggest a deep breath and a count to three—five if you require it. You can even go to 10. What I do suggest is that you all think very carefully about what comes out of your mouth in the few minutes that are remaining. Minister for Finance, you have the call.

Dr A.D. BUTI: During the debate on the last private member’s motion for this year, there was an opportunity to talk about something of substance. To give the Leader of the Opposition credit, she did try to make a contribution of some substance.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I am not taking interjections.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I am not taking interjections. Acting Speaker, I seek your protection.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Moore, I call you to order for the third time.

Dr A.D. BUTI: At least the Leader of the Opposition tried to debate the substance of the motion. It was an appallingly drafted motion for a start, but at least she tried. But it all went downhill when the member for Cottesloe got to his feet, and then obviously the member for North West Central did not make it any better.

They will go down in history for not standing up and denouncing strongly and loudly the threats against a political leader in Western Australia and, more so, his family and his staff. Shame on them. It does not matter what happens over the next three years. Shame on them. Shame on every single one of them for not standing up, and for being equivocal in the anti-vax debate by saying, “Oh, you impose a mandate; what is going to happen if there are some problems?” No. We still do not know what your position is on mandatory vaccination. What is your position? There is silence now, but they have been interjecting. That is a classic! They know they will not be called out. What is your position on mandatory vaccination?

Mr R.S. Love: Mandatory vaccination? When it is supported by health advice, we support it.

Dr A.D. BUTI: So do you support the current mandatory vaccination policy that is based on health advice?

Mr R.S. Love: Yes.

Dr A.D. BUTI: So why do you keep standing up in Parliament and questioning the possible consequences of it? Why do you do that? Why do you not work with us? Why do you not go outside and say that you support it, instead of doing the typical dog whistling of the Prime Minister: “Yes, you shouldn’t do this, but I understand your frustration”? It is appalling.

Debate adjourned pursuant to standing orders.

House adjourned at 7.00 pm

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 24 November 2021]

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Ms Mia Davies; Dr David Honey; Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Tony Buti; Acting Speaker; Mr David Templeman;
Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Shane Love
