

Dr David Honey; Mr Shane Love; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Roger Cook;
Acting Speaker; Ms Jodie Hanns; Mrs Lisa O'Malley; Mr Simon Millman

ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

Motion

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe — Leader of the Liberal Party) [4.02 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the Labor government for allowing our state to miss opportunities for economic diversification and growth in critical sectors, impacting our long-term future.

It is quite clear that both WA Labor and the Treasurer are lost when it comes to economic growth and diversification of our state economy. It is also quite clear that the government has no clear economic plan or vision for Western Australia for the next 20 years. It is a government that is happy to hide behind the shadow of COVID-19 and continue to reap public support from it; however, it is not doing the hard work that a government with its majority, heading into five years of being in office, should be doing to set up Western Australia for the future. That is no more evident than in the absolute dearth of skilled labour available to businesses in the Western Australian economy. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia recently published some figures, and its modelling indicates that Western Australia is over 50 000 workers short across every sector, including tourism, hospitality, manufacturing, agriculture, mining—the list goes on. Yesterday, during question time, I put a question about this to the Premier; Treasurer. We got back a glib response that everything is fine, everything is right, we have low unemployment in this state and the state economy is doing extremely well; therefore, there is no problem in this state at all. But, as the Minister for Health would know, our health system and our hospitals utterly depend and have always depended on a steady stream of doctors, nurses and other health professionals coming into this state. During the first COVID outbreak I had the opportunity to talk to a number of people, particularly in the medical field; I had some very senior medical people come to see me. They said, “David, the casualty of this is going to be our hospital system.” Our hospital system utterly depends on experienced medical staff coming in from overseas. We have heard that the government made some late efforts to try to get some doctors in, but not nearly enough.

We see this crisis right across the state, and no more so than in the north west of the state. I am sure my colleagues will cover this in more detail, but I went to Kununurra and spoke to the hospitality industry there. It has a complete lack of workers. The main tavern in Kununurra, which is the main social centre for people, has to substantially restrict its hours because it simply cannot get workers for that area. People on holidays cannot get a meal there because the establishment has to restrict its hours or there are days when it does not open because it does not have the workers. It is more important than that; it is about the future of those industries. It is about all the skilled workers who we need. We talk about the revolution in green jobs—potentially, as I will explain in some detail. That is something that this state is failing to take advantage of. It requires people with skills, who we currently do not have in this state. Over time—over five, 10 or 15 years—we can build up that skills base, but we need to have those skilled workers in this state now.

Rio Tinto has announced that its iron ore exports will reduce by as much as 20 million tonnes in significant part because it cannot get the skilled workers it requires for that industry. Members can do the arithmetic on that, but if they multiply that 20 million tonnes by \$100 a tonne, taking a moderate estimate for iron ore prices, it is \$2 billion, and 7.5 per cent of that is a state royalty, so that is tens of millions of dollars of lost revenue for this state that could be helping to solve some of the key problems we have in Western Australia. That will have a material impact on our economic activity. This is important, because those high iron ore prices will not last forever. They are temporary. All forecasters recognise it.

The member for Willagee gave a great speech at the start of this Parliament in March this year about the existential threat to iron ore prices. Getting the advantage of those high iron ore prices now is critically important, but industry is being held back by labour shortages. The response we got yesterday, as I said, from the Premier; Treasurer was, “What’s the problem? There’s no problem, because we’ve got low unemployment now, because the economy is buoyant.” We know why we have low unemployment, and that is because we have a resources industry that is at historic highs. It has nothing to do with this state government. It is a quirk of the global economy and the expansion in China.

One substantial reason for Western Australia’s low unemployment rate is that the government has stopped those skilled workers coming into the state. The government might say it is a good thing, but it is holding back critical industries. I was talking to a drilling contractor in Kalgoorlie a couple of months ago. A labour shortage is the only thing stopping that contractor from expanding his business, which is critically important for the future, with mines now being held back. That exploratory drilling work is critically important for the future, but it is being held back because contractors simply cannot get labour in Kalgoorlie. This contractor cannot get labour to meet the customer needs of his business. That will impact us in the future.

This highlights a lack of experience on the part of the Premier and Treasurer in this place to think that this fundamental labour constraint is not a problem for the economy of Western Australia now and into the future. As I said, we all

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know what has caused the budget surplus at the moment, and what causes the low unemployment levels. I welcome low unemployment levels, but I do not welcome the negative impact that this is having on our economy now, and particularly into the future. The Treasurer's job is not just about economic prosperity now; it is about economic prosperity in 10 or 20 years. This government has a really unique opportunity to use its numbers in this place. It has ascendant numbers in this Parliament and has complete control of both houses. It can sit back, work out a cogent economic plan for this state and implement it. Not that members on this side would stop something as positive as that, but the government has the absolute opportunity to do that. We have a lot of backbenchers sitting in this chamber, and I suspect in the upper house as well, who have plenty of time on their hands. We have some new members in this place who are pretty sharp cookies from what I can see—not all of them, but I will not name them so as not to embarrass anyone.

Ms S.E. Winton: The good ones or the bad ones?

Dr D.J. HONEY: The good ones are sitting in the chamber at the moment.

Mr R.H. Cook interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: They are the people who care, minister. The government can do that because it has a unique opportunity. Governments do not get many opportunities like this; in fact, it is a unique opportunity. I am sure that the minister opposite, the member for Armadale, who is a student of politics, could tell me the last time a government had absolute control in both houses. I think it was back in Sir Charles Court's era.

Dr A.D. Buti: What do you mean "absolute control"?

Dr D.J. HONEY: As in control of both houses of Parliament.

Dr A.D. Buti: You always do!

Dr D.J. HONEY: No; it is less common than the minister thinks, but I stand corrected. I will bow to the minister's political wisdom on this, as in some other matters.

It is a real threat to us. Our agricultural sector is struggling for workers. The good season we have had this year is unlikely to occur again. It is probably the best agricultural season I have seen in my lifetime. It could well be that we have years of extremely dry conditions following this, and those farmers will not have the opportunity to maximise the economic benefit from this year. If they cannot get their crops off and into the bins, and CBH cannot get the grain to port in time to take advantage of those premium prices at this time of the year and over the Christmas period, growers will not get the advantage of that. That will stop them from putting money away for those bad seasons that will inevitably come in the future. It is not as easy as saying, "We're missing out this year" or "Maybe we'll miss out this year"; it will have an impact in the future.

I find the ad hoc nature of the way that people are allowed into this state and the way that workers are brought into this state to be really concerning, dumbfounding and, in many cases cruel can I say. We heard from the Treasurer that some agricultural workers were allowed into the state. Why were not more agricultural workers allowed into the state? What was the criteria? How was the number of workers we bring into the state decided? The truth is that many tens of thousands of workers have been brought into WA. The Minister for Health will know—I do not know—the better part of 20 000 overseas migrants have come to Western Australia in the COVID period. I assume that workers who have travelled interstate must be at the 100 000 level, or something like that. Tens and tens of thousands of people have come to Western Australia from overseas and interstate, but for some reason we have not been able to bring in sufficient workers in these key areas. I raise that example because the government knows how to safely bring people into the state. The government boasts all the time that it is keeping Western Australians safe and we have not had COVID outbreaks. The government knows how to do this. After the COVID pandemic started, it was obvious that bringing labour into the state was a major concern, and we encouraged the government at that time to provide a purpose-built facility for that. What happened? The government held its breath and played this finger-pointing game with the federal government—it is their fault; it is not our job, and so on. Meanwhile, who suffers? It is Western Australia. The government can point fingers all it likes and it can score a point against its political opposite in the federal government, but it does not help the state of Western Australia.

Even more confusing for many people is that when it came to sport, football teams were crisscrossing the country with their significant entourages. It was not just the football players; I suspect there are twice as many people supporting those teams than actual players. The other issue that many people found confronting was that certain entertainers and high profile business people could travel around at will. I will not name them in this place, but I met a number of people in my electorate who, in the height of the COVID period, said they would not shake my hand because they had just got back from overseas or Melbourne or wherever. This was when a daughter could not visit her dying mother in another state, yet it seemed that some people had complete immunity to travel restrictions. The fact is that people could travel. Why could it not be done in those critical areas? This is holding back the state not just for now but for the future.

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Another area of concern, which I asked a question about today and which has the potential to cause enormous harm to all of us in this state, is the failure of this government in relation to the Aboriginal heritage legislation. I know that this is not trivial, and it is not a simple matter, but as I pointed out today during question time by way of a supplementary question, this government abolished the department of Aboriginal heritage. I heard the Premier say that that was a good thing and it was supported. I have spoken to a large number of Aboriginal people who are very concerned about it. This argument that it comes into the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and, therefore, it is all right and it actually gives it status does not hold water. Those communities have seen a lack of appropriate focus. A review started three years ago, in March 2018, and progress has been glacial. I know this is not trivial. It is a matter that is so important to the state of Western Australia that that is where the government should put in extra resources and extra effort. We have heard from a number of Aboriginal leaders in Western Australia that they have not heard from the government or they have heard very late from the government in relation to this bill. Equally, I understand the point that the Premier made that there will not be a solution that will have every single person saying this is a wonderful outcome and that everyone will be perfectly satisfied. There will be some compromise in that bill. However, a consequence of the time it has taken is that there is a very real risk, and we are verging on the likelihood, that the federal government will step in. Everyone in this place who cares about timely approvals and appropriate consideration of Aboriginal heritage will know that it is best managed in this state. I do not care whether it is a Liberal government or a Labor government; I have faith that a Labor government would manage this appropriately and well when it is in power, as I would when we are in power. I do not have the same faith that we would get the right outcomes for Western Australia if Canberra, at its great distance, is managing this issue. There was a report that came out of the current parliamentary inquiry into the Juukan Gorge incident—Premier, thank you! The report says —

In light of the criticisms of the operation of the current and proposed Western Australian legislation, the Committee considers that the Commonwealth Government has a role in legislating for minimum cultural heritage protection standards.

It makes this finding —

The Australian Parliament should legislate for an overarching Commonwealth legislative framework based on the protection of cultural heritage rather than its destruction, in line with the principles set out below. State and territory legislation should also be required to meet the principles set out in this report.

As I have said, I think there is unanimity in this house that Aboriginal heritage should be appropriately protected, but the question is how best to do it. I am sure the minister has had to intersect with federal legislation at different times. I resonate with the point that the Premier made today: the states are different. They have different imperatives and different needs. In applying the view of metropolitan-centric Melbourne and Sydney to complex issues of cultural heritage and sustaining our mining industry in Western Australia, those two things would not mix well. As I said today, we on this side are absolutely committed. We will work with the government in any way to get this through, but we need to see it and it would be good if we saw it soon. We are not going to sit here and politically pointscore off this, other than to say, “Get it done.” We will say that. We will criticise the government for not getting it done, but we are not going to try to pick holes in this. We will try to work as cooperatively with the government as we possibly can to get the best outcome for the state, and we definitely want to do everything in our power to make sure that we keep this legislation and this control within the state of Western Australia and not have it controlled from Melbourne and Sydney in the metropolitan-centric eastern states.

To finish on that point, if it did happen, that would have a very direct, substantial negative impact on our state economy. I have spoken to the large miners and they tell me that from identifying a suitable ore body to actually having that ore body in production takes up to six or seven years, maybe even longer. If federal legislation interceded on this, that would very likely blow that out by three or four years more. For the big players, that may be okay and maybe they could get through that. But for our mid-tier and junior players, that would be unsustainable because they could not carry the capital debt for that many years before they got into production. That will ultimately impact on our economy if it comes to pass.

We have come to see what appears to be the government’s idiosyncratic, ad hoc decision-making in relation to COVID, but we also see that in a number of areas. We see major changes being implemented without any appropriate consultation, with industry being completely blindsided by the government’s decisions. It appears that someone gets a rush of blood and they make a decision. Then they come in and just blindside a particular industry. We saw that with the tax on the gold industry and all the efforts around that. We saw that with the ham-fisted effort of the current Minister for Water, the then Minister for Fisheries, in trying to bludgeon the crayfish industry into submission on some socialist agenda that he had in his own mind. We saw that in relation to the oil and gas industry. We in this place have never heard the rationale for shutting down the onshore oil and gas industry and preventing exports. Even more so, we have never heard how a couple of winners are picked out of the onshore manufacturers in the oil and gas industry.

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We are certainly seeing a massive revolution in the energy industry. If natural gas were to be our only pre-eminent cleaner energy source for the next hundred years, I could understand the logic of it and the government could articulate that and so on. The world is going through an energy revolution—members know that. The federal Liberal government is now, obviously, very much onto the net zero emissions by 2050. It will soon, I think, be the coalition government keen on that! Members can see that that is a massive cultural change. As members here would know, I am a fan of this.

Mr R.H. Cook: Will they get there?

Dr D.J. HONEY: They will get there.

As I have said, this is not a political argument anymore. This is a social movement as much as it is anything. There is a profound cultural change around the world and the community is saying that it is not very interested in subtle arguments about whether members of Parliament think it is economical; it is what we as a community demand. There are many things like that in the community for which it is a profound social change. Therefore, we are going to move to decarbonise our economy. As members know, what that means is at the moment there is an enormous demand for natural gas around the world. If we do not develop those onshore deposits and allow exports—a number of years ago, I would have had a very different view from this, but, clearly, the situation has changed very dramatically—we will never bring that wealth and development into those communities. But, as I say, it is haphazard; we see a couple of winners and lots of losers in that. The Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association, or APPEA, was completely blindsided by that decision. There was no consultation at all. The Premier just came out and said, “This is what we’re doing.” We then had the arbitrary decision about an exemption for Waitsia and, recently, Black Mountain has been allowed one. Why? What is the rationale for that? How does the government go to the other onshore gas producers and say, “This is why you have been singled out to not be able to do it, but these other companies are allowed to do it.” I want to make it very clear that I am not criticising those companies. I am glad that they have been able to get out there and prosecute the argument for their businesses. My issue does not sit with those organisations; it sits with the government with this idiosyncratic form of decision-making, which blindsides other organisations.

When we look at forestry—again, my colleagues will talk about this more fully in a moment—we see an attack by this Labor government on the forestry industry. Frankly, I do not think that I have heard more nonsense said about a decision in my life than in the justification for that. There are a couple of nonsensical parts. The first is: if you go to plant some pine trees, that means that you are not destroying thousands of jobs. When do members opposite reckon people can put a pine tree through a mill? The government has come out as saying there will be no hardwood logging after 2024. That is the government’s decision. It will cut out all the hardwood. Therefore, how big will those pine trees be in 2024? Will they be about as tall as me or maybe a bit taller? I tell members opposite this: they will not be going through a mill and being cut into beams for housing or construction.

Mr R.S. Love: I do not think they’ll be as tall as you, because they’ve got no land!

Dr D.J. HONEY: Excellent point!

Mr R.S. Love: And then you plant it, so —

Dr D.J. HONEY: Excellent point, Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr R.S. Love: I think they’ll be in a box somewhere.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I think they will be in someone’s dream file, will they not, because there is no land to plant the coupe, but let us assume the best. Let us assume that the government magically finds some land. Perhaps the rehabilitation of the coalmine pits of Collie could do; there is a suggestion that members opposite could consider. Maybe the government will find the land, but there is no way that timber will be able to be milled from those plantations for 10 to 20 years—even if laminated beams were made. It beggars belief that the government could say that that will be the thing that stops the loss of jobs. It is just utterly nonsensical.

The other one was that somehow or other this will deal with the greenhouse gas issue. What a load of rubbish. I think it has escaped the attention of members on the other side that when trees are cut down, they grow again. It is the most sustainable industry in the state. It is carried out by enormously professional people. The department of forestry is an outstanding scientifically based organisation. It is a sustainable industry. It is sustainable for thousands of years, completely greenhouse gas neutral in relation to the cycling of the timber that is cut down and then regrows, and it is put here as a greenhouse gas-saving issue! I am fascinated that the Minister for Environment said that she is concerned about greenhouse gas emissions. It might be of interest to at least the members who are here: what do they think has happened to greenhouse gas emissions from Western Australia since this government came to power?

Mr P.J. Rundle: I’m not too sure.

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Dr D.J. HONEY: I am glad the member for Roe is interested. Talk about a big fail for government: greenhouse gas emissions in Western Australia, from the most recently available data, which is 2017 to 2019—under the term of this government—has increased from 81.3 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions to 91.9 tonnes of CO₂ emissions per annum. The minister says she is making the hard decisions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in some imagined way because she will stop the sustainable hardwood forestry industry, but in fact what we have seen is an increase under this government of 10 million tonnes per annum of CO₂ emissions. The Minister for Environment has completely failed her job. She comes in here with a virtue-signalling and destructive policy to say that she is doing something about the environment. She has done nothing. Quite the opposite. The minister has done worse than nothing: greenhouse gas emissions have gone up dramatically under this government. There has been an almost 13 per cent increase in greenhouse gas emissions under this government in the state of Western Australia. The minister came out with some headline-grabbing story, destroying thousands of jobs in the state. That is not leadership by the government.

In my last few minutes, I will finish off by talking about green hydrogen. We have not had a chance to discuss this. Western Australia is now the last Australian state to develop a green hydrogen industry. I encourage every member in this place to listen to the presentation made by Andrew Forrest to the National Press Club of Australia. Hear what he had to say about this government and this Premier in relation to this matter. This government has completely failed. It has completely missed the boat. A pre-eminent Western Australian, a highly regarded businessperson who is passionate and devoted to Western Australia in Dr Andrew Forrest and his company Fortescue Metals Group's Fortescue Future Industries, had to go to Tasmania, Queensland and New South Wales to establish those facilities. Think about how profound that is. I will focus on it again: Andrew Forrest is going to build a facility in Gladstone, Queensland, that will manufacture electrolyzers. It may not mean much to government members, but that is how hydrogen is made—from water. Electricity is passed through an electrolyser to split the water into oxygen and hydrogen. The factory being built in Queensland will double the global supply of electrolyzers. It will be the most significant manufacturing facility in the world for building electrolyzers. This is leading edge, high-tech manufacturing, and Western Australia missed out because this Premier; Treasurer, and the Minister for Lands, and whoever else should have been involved, could not deliver 40 hectares of suitable industrial land for that facility. Imagine that!

Mr V.A. Catania: Unbelievable.

Dr D.J. HONEY: It is unbelievable—starting at a \$1 billion investment.

The New South Wales government has shown the way by investing \$3 billion. What does this government do? Where is the capital investment from this government? We heard from the Minister for Transport today in question time—in the way that she boasts, and cajoles and derides this side of the house. She has overseen the single-largest capital cost blowout in a government capital project in the history of this state—that is, the Metronet project. The scope of that project has barely changed, some minor tinkering has been done, yet it has gone from \$2.945 billion to \$7.4 billion in the last budget.

Mr P.J. Rundle: And rising.

Dr D.J. HONEY: And rising. As I have said many times in this place, what the member for North West Central said about the project costing \$10 billion will be 100 per cent correct—depressingly! Imagine what that \$4 billion cost overrun could have done at Oakajee. If that money had been invested there and if that industrial estate was established, Andrew Forrest would have built his facility there. If appropriate land had been available in the Kwinana–Rockingham industrial area, he would have built that facility there. That is true for all the investors in that area.

I want to give my colleagues a proper opportunity to make their contributions. However, this is where we are at the moment in relation to green hydrogen in this state. We are where the iron ore industry was in the 1960s and the natural gas industry was in the 1970s and 1980s. You are either on that train at the start or you miss it. At this stage, Western Australia is missing it. I know for a fact because I have spoken to a large number of people who are looking at investing in this state and they all say the same thing—the absence of critical enabling infrastructure, the purpose-built industrial estates and the connection into the south west interconnected system means that they will not be able to initiate their projects in this state. Some things will happen in Western Australia; there will be little things. The government has put a couple of hundred million dollars aside and whatever, so some people will take advantage of that. The heavy hitters, the mainstream projects and the early starters will have all the early-starter advantage in this technology that is being built in the eastern states—namely, Bell Bay in Tasmania, Queensland and New South Wales, where industrial estates already exist or they are building new industrial facilities for it. Western Australia is missing out.

Every member opposite should be fundamentally ashamed of the lack of performance of their government in this area. We are missing the start of the most important opportunity for the most significant future industry in the world, not only in Australia but also Western Australia, because of a lack of investment and a lack of effort by this government. The government can come out with all the flash press releases it likes, all the green statements it likes and all the distractions it likes, but the fundamental bottom line here is that Western Australia is missing out on

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tens of thousands of jobs. Already, thousands of high-quality, high-paying and exciting jobs have gone to the eastern states just for one of our major companies in Western Australia that should be investing here. An absolute travesty has occurred under this government. It is clear that this government has no proper economic plan. It is clear, even in opportunities that this government itself has identified, that it prefers to focus on short-term politicking rather than on doing the hard, important work to ensure we have a proper future—an investment in the future for our children and grandchildren having high-quality work in this state.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [4.39 pm]: I rise to contribute to this important motion brought to the house by the Leader of the Liberal Party, which states —

That this house condemns the Labor government for allowing our state to miss opportunities for economic diversification and growth in critical sectors, impacting our long-term future.

It is, of course, our long-term future that we are talking about here. We are living through a pandemic and that colours many of the decisions being made both here and around the world. However, in the long term, we need to ensure we have a diversified and strong economy. The member for Cottesloe spoke a little bit about the importance of onshore gas. I note that it is 50-odd years since onshore gas development began in this state, in Dongara. I was privileged to be in Dongara last week for the opening of stage 3 of the Waitsia development up there and to see it happening in the area I represent, which is good because there will be jobs there for the local community for years to come. I think the member for Cottesloe touched upon the many other opportunities in that region, including Oakajee and the need for some common facilities, if you like, and better electricity connections to that site, which is nothing more than a bit of bush at the moment. Also, we need to look at how other areas can develop exciting proposals for hydrogen facilities from Dongara all the way up to the far north of the state. All through that area, proponents who have ideas, vision, experience and technology are coming forward. However, I am hearing from a lot of them that they are not getting the ear of or the necessary support from government to ensure those projects can go ahead. There is a plea there for the government to do more to ensure that these fledgling industries can get underway. If anyone happened to be watching Andrew Forrest's contribution on Monday on the television program *Flashpoint*, they would have seen that it was very instructive when he spoke about the value of hydrogen in the future being multitrillions of dollars in contrast with our huge iron ore industry, which is comparatively minor compared with the potential value of hydrogen. That is why he is pushing it in a big way. As the member for Cottesloe said, Andrew Forrest is moving to establish a hydrogen industry in other states to do that. It is pretty clear as a Western Australian that it is probably not something he would do if he was getting the necessary support here.

Dr A.D. Buti: We have a hydrogen industry here.

Mr R.S. LOVE: The Minister for Lands is fundamentally one of those ministers who has contributed to the big fail at this point, so I do not think he should be shouting out.

Dr A.D. Buti: What's the fail?

Mr R.S. LOVE: We will hear from other members in more detail about those matters.

Dr A.D. Buti: You have no idea.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr D.A.E. Scaife): Minister for Finance!

Mr R.S. LOVE: I do have a fairly good idea. I was Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Lands. I know what you have not been doing since you guys have been in government for nearly five years.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister for Finance, I call you to order for the first time. I give the call to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Thank you. He has done nothing to progress the diversity of economic opportunity in the rangelands, which is fundamentally one of the flaws impeding the ability to develop hydrogen in the rangelands area, so do not shout at me, minister; go and do your job.

We know that economic diversity is essential to our economy if we want to go forward.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister!

Mr R.S. LOVE: We have had a great boom in the last few years. We have seen the expansion in China ramp up demand for iron ore to extraordinary levels. Of course, China has been buying iron ore from us because it has had little choice about where to buy it because, as we know, Brazil has had its problems. We also know that we cannot afford to bury our head in the sand and we cannot expect to live off the iron ore boom forever. We need to use this opportunity to grow our economy in many other areas. It is not a matter of just servicing the existing iron ore industry.

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We need to ensure that we have a wide diversity of mineral industries. We have very rich mineral provinces in many areas. We need to ensure that good regimes are in place so that future mining industries and future mines can develop.

One of the other issues that is brewing and has been spoken about here is the need to develop and put in place appropriate Aboriginal heritage legislation. We know that is essential and that the development of new minerals, new mines and new opportunities throughout the state will stall if Western Australia does not act quickly and with a genuine attempt to provide a legislative framework that will enable the Aboriginal cultural heritage of our area to be celebrated, retained and protected while also allowing for the appropriate exploration and use of land. The report that was handed down is crystal clear in its call for the commonwealth to come in over the top of all the states with overarching legislation to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage in a similar way that the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act is there for the environment.

We have worked through a process of trying to do away with a dual environmental approval system. We have done our bit with changes to the Environmental Protection Act. As yet, a single approvals process under those two acts has not been recognised at the commonwealth level. We do not want to see that situation replicated for Aboriginal cultural heritage. We need a process that is clear and does not involve decision-making both in Canberra and in Western Australia. We want to see a one-stop shop that is fair, open and appropriate, but something has to be done and done quickly to ensure that our processes are in place that satisfy the need to protect our heritage and enable future development to occur.

Getting back to the iron ore situation, we know that China has been a huge part of that demand and we know that there have been increasing trade tensions with China in many, many areas. I have heard it all blamed on a call by the federal government to understand where the current COVID pandemic outbreak occurred and to look at those circumstances. That call by the federal government is regularly blamed for all the problems we see manifested in the trade situation with China. However, I draw members' attention to what happened with barley. I am talking about the crop barley, not the island! In November 2018, before COVID was even known—this is now three years ago—China initiated anti-dumping measures and a countervail investigation into Australian barley exported to China between 1 October 2017 and 20 September 2018. The allegation was that there was dumping. The Chinese conducted an 18-month investigation and the Chinese Ministry of Commerce ruled that both dumping and subsidisation had occurred and it imposed an 80.5 per cent tariff on Australian barley. This vulnerability to actions by the Chinese central government is not new. I think we need to remember that when we blame the current Prime Minister for all the woes that occur in our trade with China. A lot of work was put into getting a free trade agreement. To provide a bit of context, my electorate, for instance, is where a lot of the rock lobster catch was taken. For years I knew there was a thing called the “grey trade”, whereby large amounts of rock lobster were sent to Vietnam, Hong Kong and other places and smuggled over the borders in backpacks or some other way, to arrive in China. It created a premium product but in no way was it the proper way to conduct the trade. Of course, the value of that produce was being lost as it was being handled in that inappropriate way. At long last, trade was able to occur freely and rock lobster could be delivered straight to markets in China. We now know that that has been stopped and I note the reports in the last couple of days of Hong Kong authorities—now part of the mainland authorities—seizing, I think, 5 300 kilograms, or 5.3 tonnes, of lobster, and arresting 13 people involved in that grey trade, which, once again, has had to kick off because China has closed its doors to the Australian product. We need to have a diverse economy. We cannot rely upon one customer and we cannot rely upon one product.

Another example is wine exports. A report highlighted in *The West Australian* yesterday showed that wine exports to China have slumped to a dramatic low after hefty tariffs were imposed in November last year. We have to accept that we need a diverse economy. We need a diversity not only of product and type of industries, but also where those industries find their markets. We still have strong demand for iron ore and many other products. We need to capitalise on that and make sure that we have the necessary workforce in place to make the most of these opportunities that in some cases are once-in-a-generation opportunities. If we do not capitalise on them, they will not remain in place.

I note that a recently released Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia business confidence survey says that the Western Australian economy is short 55 000 workers. That shortfall is set to cost business \$1.5 billion over the next year. Just one-third, or 35 per cent, of vacancies in Western Australia are expected to be filled by local workers. It is obvious that we need to have a workforce to make the most of our opportunities so that we can diversify our economy, we can get into the new economies such as hydrogen and critical minerals and we can take advantage of the exciting opportunities that our abundance of natural gas provides both as a transitional fuel through the transition to net zero emissions and in its ability to contribute directly to the development of blue hydrogen as a stepping stone towards a full green hydrogen industry. One company is looking to develop a urea plant in my area so that in the future we can help Western Australian farmers have access to urea that has a lower carbon footprint than the stuff that is imported from China. That will be helpful for Australian agriculture to help the rest of the country achieve net zero emissions. The agricultural industry has tremendous concerns about the change to net zero. I also

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understand that there are tremendous opportunities in carbon sequestration in soil et cetera. The Nationals WA have taken the position of ensuring that Western Australia move to a net zero position by 2050. If industries need assistance getting there or if communities need help in that process, that help should be made available to them. We are not going to do what this government did to the forestry industry in the south west and announce changes overnight that are ill-conceived, politically contrived and poorly delivered. We will not be doing that. We will work to ensure that when any changes occur as we strive towards net zero by 2050, the people of Western Australia are brought along for that journey, along with the industries that we represent right through our broad church of electorates across the state, including our alliance partners in some beautiful parts of the south west, important parts of the metropolitan area, including Cottesloe, and, of course, the vast areas of the north west and the Agricultural Region. There are opportunities throughout those areas that we need to grasp. We need a government with vision that will think past the easy path of riding on the back of the current iron ore situation and hoping that will last forever because we know that it will not. We need to take the opportunities as they arise and we need the workforce to be able to do that.

I am sure that the member for Vasse will outline just how parlous the state of our health system in Western Australia is at the moment, and how that is dictating our current reluctance to set firm targets and set a firm road map out of the situation we are in now, where we cannot even get critical workers in anymore. It is one thing that we cannot have family reunions and tourism but it is another that we cannot get the critical workforce we need to fill those 55 000 jobs. If we do not get those 55 000 jobs filled, imagine what opportunities we will lose. Imagine what extra demand there will be simply by having those wages flowing through our economy. That would be a huge boost to our economy, which would have a multiplier effect for years to come. The state of our health system is really holding it back. The reluctance of this government to look critically at how to overcome those shortages is something I am sure the member for Roe will talk about because he has long been an advocate for the agricultural areas to have workers available to harvest products, to get the strawberries picked, to harvest the bananas in Carnarvon and whatever else needs to be done. The member for North West Central, who is sitting behind me, has been a great advocate for the tourism industry and small business, which also need workers. There is a shortage of 55 000 workers. Mines are short of workers. I am not saying this in a blasé way because I know the mining industry has huge problems, but it can afford to pay good money to get workers instead of getting those workers from other industries at the expense of other industries. That highlights the fact that the other industries I have just spoken about—the farming sector, small businesses and the tourism industry—simply cannot compete on the price of labour.

Today we heard the announcement by the Western Australian government about the way forward.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr R.S. LOVE: Apparently, Western Australia will have a very high bar of mandatory vaccination for a wide range of industries, probably most of the Western Australian workforce. Interestingly, one of the industries that already has a mandatory level of vaccination, with its workers having had to be vaccinated by 15 October, I think, employ the workers on the wharves. The wharfies have been on strike for four or five weeks. How long has it been, member for Roe? It has been months, has it not?

Mr P.J. Rundle: Three.

Mr R.S. LOVE: It has been three months. That strike has been going on for a while. Out of the blue, on Saturday, I believe about a quarter of them did not show up for their first day back at work because they were not vaccinated. We already have a severe workforce shortage. In the midst of that, the only response we have to engage Western Australians to get them to vaccinate so we can get to the level we need to protect the community is to mandate that they have a vaccine. Some will not take up the offer. Then we will have an even more acute worker shortage.

Mr P.J. Rundle: They were a Labor-affiliated union.

Mr R.S. LOVE: It is not just them. People working in other areas are saying they do not want to go down that path. I do not agree with them. I am vaccinated. I support the need for people to be vaccinated. To go down the path of mandatory vaccination in virtually every industry at a time when we are already short of workers is quite counterproductive. I question its value. I question the whole approach of turning our vaccine strategy into policing it and enforcing it, when we have done nothing to convince Western Australians of the need to get vaccinated. We have done very little to ensure that places are available to get vaccinated. I have spoken before in this place about the Shire of Chapman Valley and the lack of available vaccines for people in that area. On Saturday, *The West Australian* reported that one of the farmers there had said that he tried to get an appointment in Northampton, but the number rings out. People are time-poor. We have to enable people to get vaccinated. Nothing has been done to ensure that regional people actually have the ability or the opportunity to go and get vaccinated. What have we done to put the message out there? We have put the message out as a mandate: "You must get it done."

I know that the Minister for Health says that this is a commonwealth responsibility, but we have a very low level of vaccination amongst Aboriginal people. Our Vaccine Commander is the head of the police. I would have thought that if the government wants to encourage Aboriginal people to get vaccinated, it might use someone that they feel

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connected to, maybe Ernie Dingo or some other outstanding Aboriginal member of the community who could be giving the message and encouraging people to go and get vaccinated, to counter some of the ridiculous propaganda that is being fed around Aboriginal communities to scare people away from having the vaccine. In my view, we need to do that as a matter of some urgency. We need to forget the finger-pointing about who is responsible for what. A lot of Aboriginal people do not live in remote Western Australia; a lot of Aboriginal people live in Narrogin, York, Beverley and Cranbrook, and in Perth as well, so, along with the general population, they need to be reassured and given the opportunity.

As far as the public health campaign goes, it is a complete fail. It has just been non-existent. I am still seeing smoking ads, like the one that shows someone wringing tar out of their lungs. We are in the middle of a pandemic and we need people to get vaccinated. The government should spend all its money on public health advertising on this one message. It should not worry about asking people to get the flu or measles shot or to give up smoking; it should put all its eggs into trying to convince people rather than forcing them to go and get vaccinated. Let people know that if they get vaccinated in sufficient numbers, we can navigate a path to a point in the future when we will be able to travel more freely, fill all the jobs we have and provide a decent future for our children, who have been struggling under this regime for the last couple of years. Yes, everyone is safe and being kept safe here in Western Australia at this point, and we have not had much in the way of COVID, but people need opportunities as well. At some point in the future, we are going to have to get back to a more normal situation whereby our young people can travel, take up opportunities at universities across the world, learn other cultures and have the experiences that everybody in this room has had the opportunity to have in their lifetime.

I urge the Western Australian government to rethink its course, because unless we have a vaccination program that is more encouraging—more of the carrot and less of the stick—we are not going to solve the many problems, such as skill shortages, that Western Australian industry faces and we are not going to get all the benefits that Western Australia could have from a road map out of the current situation.

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe) [5.03 pm]: I rise to also support the very good motion moved today by the member for Cottesloe on the fact that this Labor government is missing many opportunities that are imperative for the economic diversification of our state, which has adversely impacted WA's industry growth and development.

I am glad that the Minister for Health is here. I heard his figures in question time today about the increase in maternity workers and so forth, but we in Katanning are still waiting for the health minister to come forth. We still have no maternity arrangements in Katanning, but with his 12 per cent increase in maternity workers and staff, I look forward to him visiting us in the not-too-distant future and giving us some good news about the recommencement of the maternity arrangements in Katanning. That is beside the point, but I thought it was important to bring it up, given the numbers that he came out with in question time today.

Member for North West Central, I start by talking about my disappointment with the Minister for Agriculture and Food. I read in Saturday morning's paper that the agricultural minister was standing in a green crop, asking how green the crop has to get before it can be harvested. What actually happens is the crop ripens and goes brown and yellow, then it is harvested. Farmers do not wait for it to get greener.

Mr V.A. Catania: I think she was talking about the policies of the Labor Party.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: It was concerning to hear that from the minister who is meant to be representing the agricultural sector in WA, member for North West Central. There is a concern right there. We have a minister who has to get a grip on what happens in harvesting and the fact that we need people to help farmers harvest their crops.

I do not think it is any secret that the minister has dropped the ball. I refer to some of the scenarios with the Bladin Village debacle. Farmers are sick of deflection from this government. People can listen to the *WA Country Hour* radio show at lunchtime every day of the week, but no answers are being supplied by this government. We have a real concern about Bladin Village, because the Premier and the ag minister were seemingly working at cross-purposes. I will say that, at the time, the ag minister did show some genuine concern. She understood that we need farmers, farm workers and skilled operators, because a lot of these harvesters, field bins and pieces of equipment are getting up close to a million dollars now, and we need skilled labour to operate them.

I will give members a bit of a history lesson. The federal Minister for Agriculture and Northern Australia, David Littleproud, was quoted as saying that Premier McGowan and all Premiers reaffirmed on 11 December 2020 at national cabinet that they would maintain responsibility for the quarantining of agricultural workers. That is what he told *The West Australian*. The agreed process was that the Premiers were to write to the Prime Minister with their quarantine arrangements and the commonwealth would process the visas, and that process has not changed. We know that Christmas Island was not suitable, so the commonwealth government put up Bladin Point in the Northern Territory as an option if our state government could negotiate with the Northern Territory government.

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I want to go back through a bit of the history here. On 7 September 2021, I asked the Premier about skilled agriculture workers. His response to me was to defer it to the federal government. He said that the federal government controls the international borders and that is it. We have the Work and Wander Out Yonder campaign and that is great. Well, I am sorry. On 7 September, when we raised our matter of public interest, I quoted Minister MacTiernan, who said, "It's too hard; it's too difficult. I've tried, but I just can't quite deliver it." I believe that the ag minister was trying to deliver it, but we had the Premier, who was still playing his games, trying to deflect to the federal government and blame it for anything possible. It is quite bizarre, because this government has extracted billions of dollars out of the federal government for the transport network and many other infrastructure projects; however, it seems to almost take pleasure in criticising the federal government. It has come to a point where the federal government has said, "No, that's not on". On this occasion, the federal government said it could get these skilled workers in, but that the Premier and the agriculture minister needed to work with the Northern Territory. Unfortunately, the Premier chose to play politics instead.

We now have a \$7 billion crop out there. I know that some of the crops that were being harvested up around Geraldton before the rain came in yesterday were going really well. The price of canola is right up there and it is really essential that we get our crop off. That is \$7 billion for this state economy, and we need to work hard. I think the pattern set in when the Premier forgot to include the agricultural sector in his skills summit. It was not until the Western Australian Farmers Federation and the Pastoralists and Graziers Association reminded the Premier that he ought to include the agricultural sector in a skills summit that it was invited. It was before it started, but that was a bit of an indication of how the second-biggest industry in Western Australia, after mining, seems to have been forgotten. I cannot reiterate this enough: we are going to see a period over the next couple of months in which farmers are going to be working 14, 16 or 18 hours a day, and I am worried about the work health and safety aspect. They have a valuable crop. This government does not seem to have been able to round up any skilled workers and I think we have some real issues coming up. I hope it does not happen. The federal government has spent nearly \$300 billion over the COVID period. The state government has a \$5.8 billion surplus and it has done very little to help get skilled workers.

I will now move on to the port dispute, which the member for Moore referred to. I will take members back to estimates in which, obviously, I asked the Premier about Bladin Village. He said we could use the Defence Force and any other arrangements he could think of. It flowed onto the situation at the port.

I asked the Premier —

Is the Premier aware that a massive amount of farm machinery and equipment is being held up at Fremantle port that will potentially jeopardise farmers getting harvesters, parts and the like on-farm to help with the harvest?

The Premier replied —

Which line item in the budget papers did the member refer to?

I said it was about the supply chain in paragraph 4 on page 223. The Premier replied —

I will ask the director general. I have not heard of that before, but, as the member knows, the stevedoring companies are companies and therefore come under the commonwealth industrial relations system.

This was nine weeks into the industrial dispute at Fremantle wharf. There was agricultural equipment and mining equipment there, and Dale Alcock wrote the other day that there was building equipment and cars. All parts of the economy were being affected but, nine weeks into the strike, the Premier said he was not aware of it. I am still in a state of shock about that one. I certainly got a reminder about it from one of my constituents who had three harvesters on a boat and was trying to get them. Now, thanks to the Maritime Union of Australia dispute with Qube, the harvesters were shipped back to Melbourne. Somehow, they have to get back across to Western Australia. Who will pay for that? I bet the MUA will not pay for the transport.

Several members interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Maybe Hon Kyle McGinn; he was talking about how fantastic the MUA is in his contribution in the other place. Maybe he will contribute out of his electorate allowance, but somehow I doubt it. It is quite disturbing to me that this has happened. It took people like Dale Alcock and many of our members to raise this. Hon Michaelia Cash eventually had to intervene after 12 weeks.

Several members interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: We certainly did not see any assistance from the state Labor government. That is what this motion is all about.

Several members interjected.

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Mr P.J. RUNDLE: What were we doing about it? I will tell members what happened. Eventually, after 11 and a half weeks, the Minister for Transport came in here and read out a statement that said she had written to the Fair Work Commission that day. That is what happened, 11 and a half weeks later. That is what the state Labor government has done for our farm workers and for our farm equipment, mining equipment, building equipment and cars that were all stuck at Fremantle port. It finally wrote to the Fair Work Commission after 11 and a half weeks. It is very disappointing. I am not frightened to say that I am disappointed. We seem to have had a few years in which there have not been a lot of strikes—that has been good to see—despite the fact that the salary cap has been in place. Obviously, the government has been working with the unions to keep a lid on them, but now other things are starting to play out. That was the first disappointment.

The second disappointment was the timber industry. The member for Cottesloe referred to it earlier. I want to start with a bit of a history lesson here as well. Back on 13 August 2020, an ABC News article reported that state Greens MP Diane Evers had admitted that campaigning for getting rid of native forest logging was an important issue ahead of the next election. In a statement, forestry minister Dave Kelly said that most native forests were not available to be harvested. Essentially, more than 334 000 hectares of old-growth forest was protected. The article continues —

“The Forests Product Commission has access to 38 per cent of our native forest estate ...

“[It] annually harvests less than one per cent of this allocation.”

Mr Kelly said every hectare of native forest harvested was regenerated.

Everything was not going too badly. On 3 December 2019, Minister Kelly welcomed, praised and encouraged the investment by Queensland company Parkside Timber in the south west. He said the company would increase local jobs and reopen timber mills, and that this would move closer to —

... native forestry’s transformation into a resilient, future industry that can deal with the challenges of utilising smaller logs from regrowth forests.

Minister Kelly also said —

“The McGowan Government sees Parkside’s investment as a step forward in maintaining a strong forestry industry that supports WA jobs, while still protecting the environmental values of our beautiful native forests.

What have we got now? Even less than two years later, the Minister for Environment and the Minister for Forestry have come down and pulled the rug out from underneath our south west towns and their sawmilling. It is one of the most disappointing things I have ever seen. It goes along with the program that this government seems to be employing, which is to cut first and consult later. That seems to be the latest theme—cut first and consult later. We saw it with the crayfishing industry. We saw it with the Schools of the Air. We saw it with Moora Residential College. We saw it with the agricultural college trust fund. We are now seeing it with the marine parks. The government said, “We are going to have five million hectares of marine and land-based parks. We’ll announce it and we’ll worry about consulting later.”

The government’s decision is not going down well in communities such as Esperance. They have absolutely no idea what the plan is, whether there will be any sanctuary zones and, if there are sanctuary zones, what they will be. Recreational and commercial fishers are coming to my office because the government has not done the consultation. As I said, it is cut first, consult later, which is quite a disappointment. The government’s forestry decision is the biggest disappointment, particularly in the context of the *Djarlma plan for the Western Australian forestry industry: A framework for action 2019–2030*, which was released in 2019. It is a joint project between the Forest Industries Federation of Western Australia, the state government and the Forest Products Commission. The plan sets out strategic directions for the entire Western Australian forest industry and provides a strategic framework to achieve long-term regional economic wellbeing, employment and investment to foster ecologically sustainable development and to provide social and environmental benefits. What happened? It was an opportunity to support transformative change towards a more sustainable future for Western Australia. What happened to the Djarlma plan? It was a strategic plan and framework, but the rug has been pulled straight out from underneath it. Communities such as Manjimup and Nannup are not happy. I will say that the Minister for Forestry turned up in Manjimup a few weeks ago after the outcry and spoke to the likes of the shire council, but it was too little, too late. There was no consultation.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Another thing that worries me is that we will have to import timber from places such as Indonesia and South America, which have no sustainable practices whatsoever. As I said last week, the government is appealing to the inner-city green vote—that is great—and we can see how that plan is playing out with its decision to remove regional representation from the upper house. We can see how the appeal to the inner-city green vote is going; once again, the regions have been forgotten. As the member for Cottesloe pointed out, the Forest Products Commission will be battling to buy land in areas where rainfall is more than 650 millimetres per year because of the price and availability of land. I note that the Forest Products Amendment Bill 2021 was introduced into the chamber today.

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It will amend the Forest Products Act to allow the FPC to buy land, but as the member for Cottesloe pointed out, it will take years, probably 20 years, to get timber from those pine forests. I do not know where the jobs will be in the intervening 20 years. It is quite bizarre and it is quite short-sighted, to be honest.

We need a more integrated and strategic plan. Our regional industries need support. I express my disappointment at what has played out over not only the last five years, with education cuts and the like, but also the last six months or so since the government came in with its majority in both houses. Electoral reform was not on its agenda, but in it came. It has started to pull the rug out from beneath our regional industries. Regional people and regional communities deserve some equity. This government is taking the morale out of our regional communities. Yes, the Premier has kept our regional communities safe and strong, and I acknowledge that they voted for him, but as we have seen in the last couple of days, and as the member for Moore indicated, there is no plan. Our communities are looking for guidance. We are not looking for the Premier to come out with one of his thought bubbles every second day that depends on his popularity rating and a survey: "Am I at 87 per cent or 90 per cent?" This state needs a plan and the regions of WA deserve equity and representation.

MR V.A. CATANIA (North West Central) [5.24 pm]: I rise to support the motion moved by the Leader of the Liberal Party —

That this house condemns the Labor government for allowing our state to miss opportunities for economic diversification and growth in critical sectors, impacting our long-term future.

I echo the words of my colleagues who spoke about many issues in their shadow portfolios. However, on the back of the contribution of the member for Roe, I will talk about how this government is all about spin. This government is all about focus groups and policymaking on the run, on the day. That is what the government is about, and we have seen that, from day one with the promises that were made prior to the 2017 election, to where we sit today. The Premier said that there would be rolled-gold accountability for the Labor government he leads. He may lead it for now, members, but that rolled-gold accountability is just not there. The spin and arrogance that is plaguing this government is causing concern throughout Western Australia's industry and community, and we have seen that with the government's most recent decisions.

We have an opportunity to diversify. We hear the word "diversification": "Let's diversify, let's protect the economy." The Leader of the Liberal Party, the member for Cottesloe, suggested we diversify with hydrogen—hydrogen, hydrogen, hydrogen. Members who watched Monday night's episode of *Flashpoint* would have seen Andrew Forrest talking about diversifying the economy—here is that opportunity. Anyone who knows about and understands hydrogen knows that the hydrogen industry is now basically where we were with iron ore in the 1960s. We have a blank canvas to develop an industry that will transform our resources sector and the way that we operate as a society as a whole. More importantly, the Nationals WA have a policy of net zero emissions by 2050, and the hydrogen opportunity will ensure we reach that target, perhaps much earlier than 2050. I hope that that is the case.

We hear that hydrogen is the key to diversifying the economy and, like I said, the hydrogen opportunity is the same now as what the iron ore opportunity was in the 1960s. We can sort out land tenure and agreements, but it will not be like it was with the iron ore industry in the 1960s because it did not know what was going to happen in 2021. Here is our opportunity, because we know about our resources—the abundance of solar, wind and land. We can develop a hydrogen industry to clean up industry locally and export hydrogen around the world. What an opportunity!

This government has basically thumbed its nose at a person who is trying to right the wrongs of the past. As we all know, iron ore is a large contributor to greenhouse emissions. Andrew Forrest is trying to turn his company around and ensure that it is operating on clean green hydrogen—clean green energy. What an opportunity. He is a Western Australian who is spending his own money to develop a hydrogen industry here in Australia, and he wants to do it in Western Australia, but it is not happening because it is not on the government's agenda. That is the arrogance that has crept in and is causing Western Australian industry concern.

The government should be saying, "Okay, we want to meet our net zero emissions target." I do not know whether that is Labor Party policy or government yet, but this is an opportunity to meet those targets. What can we do to assist an emerging industry that is going to transform Western Australia and the world? Western Australians could be world leaders in hydrogen, yet the government resorts to, "We're not going to help multinationals." Last time I checked, Andrew Forrest was not a multinational but a bloody good Western Australian. He is investing in philanthropic areas, development of the pastoral industry, tourism and the environment. For example, look at what is happening in Exmouth, with research opportunities at the Ningaloo Centre. He is giving back to the community.

The Premier has tall poppy syndrome and is dismissive of everyone else; we have seen that here in the house. We have seen how dismissive he is of the opposition's important questions. He is dismissive and arrogant and makes personal attacks and accusations. This so-called leader of the McGowan Labor government is clearly not a true

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statesman in his position as Premier of Western Australia. If I want to go down the Premier's path, let us look at his inferior, lackadaisical, incompetent cabinet.

Mr P.J. Rundle: No-one else is good enough to be Treasurer, apparently.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: He cannot trust anyone else to be Treasurer because it is all about control. We have seen how the Premier likes control, and it is concerning. As I have said before in this house, industry people are saying, "We're very concerned about the control the Premier has and how we cannot put our suggestions forward unless it is his idea." Businesses and industry association groups are fearful because of this government's vitriol. If things are not aligned with its thinking, it will come after you. That is what is happening. The Premier may still be relatively popular, but his popularity is waning. He likes to attack others, like the New South Wales Premier, although I have not seen a lot of criticism of the Victorian Premier. He criticises Andrew Forrest and what he is trying to do, and other people of note in this country. He is very dismissive of everyone. Perhaps the tall poppy syndrome will at some point be reversed—the tall poppy syndrome that the Premier clearly displays—and he will be cut down and be revealed for what he is really like.

A lot of opposition members, having been on the other side of the chamber at some point, know what the Premier is like. His true colours are coming out, as is the true nature of the Labor Party, as I have said before. The left controls both the sails and the rudder. We are starting to see that with some of the policies that are coming out and plaguing the Labor Party because the left is in control. We have seen that in both the recent timber industry decision and in the electoral reform legislation, which will cut regional voices. The list goes on.

The rot started back in December 2017 when the Labor government tried to get rid of the Schools of the Air—an iconic institution that provides education to kids in regional WA. The government tried to take it away, but in true form, after some public pressure, the Premier changed his mind because he has a glass jaw. The pressure did not come from regional WA, but from the metropolitan area. I say again: the electoral reform the Premier is putting through will take away regional voices and our ability to fight for things like the Schools of the Air, Moora Residential College and community resource centres. The people of Perth are concerned, because they wonder what will happen to them.

Let us look at the issues plaguing this state. The Premier can say, "We've got freedoms." Yes, we have freedoms, but they are limited freedoms; they are freedoms with conditions. No-one on this side of the house is saying, "Let's bring COVID in"; it is about dealing with the circumstances that are presenting themselves in this state at this point in time and that were forecast. The member for Roe referred to the agricultural sector and its need for workers. The same thing applies for the tourism industry. It is unable to get workers to fill positions in cafes, hotels, motels and other small businesses. There is a huge need for workers, and that was forecast when COVID first hit.

The McGowan Labor government said, "We're going to keep you safe and strong, and how good is the economy?" We all know that 30 per cent of Western Australia's economy is based on the resources sector, and some of it on the construction sector. We have two industries that make up nearly half the economic drivers of this state. The government talks about how wonderful the economy is, but it is not all beer and skittles.

We saw what happened with Frontier Lighting, and I commend the Premier for writing to the Prime Minister to try to change the federal government's loans criteria. There are a lot of businesses that rely on interstate and international travel, such as Frontier Lighting, which provides lighting for venues, and they are suffering the consequences of what is happening in Victoria and New South Wales. Why should they not be able to access federal government loans? It is different from having to go to a bank; that is the whole point. The criteria need to change to assist those businesses. They need financial support to stay alive.

We know that at some point we will get back to normal, or a new normal, and that new normal involves ensuring that we have a plan to open up to the rest of the country and the rest of the world. That is going to happen at some point. As the Leader of the Opposition said, we need a safe plan going forward. We all agree with that. However, many small businesses still need workers, such as those in tourism, agriculture and hospitality. There is still uncertainty around the government's decision-making and its far-left policies that are becoming law, and that is concerning.

Here in Western Australia we have the opportunity to hold the Surf Life Saving Championships, the Australian Track and Field Championships and the Commonwealth Games, but the government is not thinking about the long-term prosperity of Western Australia. The government is not thinking about the Commonwealth Games in 2026. If we are still in this position in 2026 of having closed borders or restrictions, we will have major problems. We have to be positive. Businesses need certainty and the tourism and resource sectors need to be able to plan for the future. A good way of planning for the future is to give gold medals to all Western Australians because they have been playing their part and keeping Western Australia safe. The government should give them a gold medal and make

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a bid for the Commonwealth Games so businesses in the Perth CBD and metropolitan area can fill hotels and capture what they have lost over the past two years.

We need to get businesses in the CBD going, get our tourism going and sell our wonderful city and state to the rest of the world. Because of the uncertainty at the moment, we are selling the message: “Don’t come to Western Australia because we can’t give you any certainty for 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026 or at any time in the future to book carnivals, games, functions and other things.” We need certainty so organisations from around the world can come to Western Australia. We promote how wonderful the state is and the opportunities that are here, so let us continue that. Let us build on what the Premier says: “How lucky are we?” We will be lucky only when we open up when every other state opens up—but we have missed the boat because we did not put up our hands for the Commonwealth Games or anything else.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: We have missed the opportunity to secure things such as the Australian Surf Life Saving Championships and the Australian Track and Field Championships. The list goes on. Perhaps we could have got the AFL grand final again. The government is not thinking about the future. People often criticise governments and politicians for thinking in only four-year terms. Here is our opportunity to plan for the next 10 years, to make sure that what has been done in terms of a buoyant tourism industry outside regional WA—not in all sectors, but in most, because Western Australians have had nowhere else to go. That has given a bit of a leg-up to regional tourism, but our tourism operators in the city need a hand. We have not able to capitalise on what has been happening because of a lack of investment.

I come back to the rhetoric, slogans and spin that the government has been putting over Western Australians in keeping Western Australia safe and strong. But we are not safe and we are not strong. We can only measure those things against the way in which our health system operates or the way in which law and order operates.

I was glad to see that the Minister for Tourism was in Exmouth the other day. I am sure that he heard about the same issues that I hear about around the safety of people in places like Exmouth, Coral Bay or the region. Having only four officers looking after potentially 50 000 people puts a bit of pressure on the community. There are not enough ambulance volunteers to service Coral Bay, which can have 5 000 or 8 000 visitors there any one time. There has been a lack of investment in our health system. I go back to Exmouth. Members can talk about code yellows in the city, but did members know that Exmouth Health Service could not take more patients because it was full? Regional hospitals are also bursting at the seams.

We are hearing about keeping people safe and strong and a health crisis that is preventing people from getting elective surgery now, but what is going to happen in the future? There has been a lack of investment. The only way I can describe it is by referring to what was happening when the McGowan Labor government came to office in 2017. There was basically a trading halt in this state when the Labor Party came to government because there was no investment in health, housing, law and order, education and so forth. That trading halt existed for two and a half to three years. Now, we are paying the price of the government not keeping pace with the investment that was needed in our health system and in housing. The government was chasing its tail. I do not need to be Einstein to work it out. The media has been talking about it. Everyone has been talking about it. That is why the borders and restrictions are in place. We need to get the health system to a certain level. We all know that. I think most people support that, but why was the government not able to make sure that the health system could cope with any COVID outbreak or elective surgery—the run-of-the-mill and general health needs of the state? Why has the government not been able to achieve that? That is the question.

The Minister for Health should not be asking the shadow Minister for Health to walk down the street and ask whether people want to keep COVID out. That is not the question. The question is: Do people think our health system is strong enough to cater for any potential outbreak of COVID? Do they think our health system is able to cater for the health needs of Western Australians? I guarantee members that 95 per cent of people would say no.

We need to look at the spin of this government and what is motivating it. Former Premier Alan Carpenter was much like this—focus groups of the day were giving the government the policy of the day. That is what this government is doing. Focus groups are giving this government the policy of the day. That is what is happening.

Mr R.H. Cook: Didn’t you support the Carpenter government?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I am trying to tell you where you went wrong. When you have minions like the member for Perth and the Minister for Transport —

Mr R.H. Cook interjected.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Who is behind the minister? It is the Minister for Emergency Services. That is what happened when all the minions of former Premier Alan Carpenter were in the office in 2008. This government is heading down the same path.

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There is a lack of confidence and concern among industry, small business, tourism operators and the general public. Without consulting, the government is changing the voting system and industry with a signature. It makes announcements about COVID-19 grants for businesses that have been affected by lockdowns but works out the detail of those grants sometime down the track—and sometime down the track means that those businesses do not get those funds until maybe three or six months later. We saw that happen with cyclone Seroja in the midwest and Kalbarri. We have heard announcements, but people are still waiting for answers and action to follow the announcements. The government is always reactive rather than proactive. That is the message I am selling tonight: the government is reactive rather than proactive. We are seeing that in the health system. We are seeing that with the housing crisis and we are seeing that in the way the government dismisses any future opportunity for this state.

The Commonwealth Games is just one of those opportunities. That would be a great opportunity for our athletes, and for our businesses, our tourism operators and the people of Western Australia, to show the rest of the world how this state has been able to lead the way in not having COVID-19 outbreaks. We can show how we have been respectful to others, have had social distancing and have put on our masks when we have had to do that. We have done everything that the government has asked us to do.

However, we are now seeing the overreach of a government that is dictating to Western Australians what to do, how to do it and when to do it. We are seeing that dictatorial relationship occur when it comes to industry. Industry is providing a fantastic opportunity for the state with, as I said, hydrogen, hydrogen, hydrogen. That will transform the way we do energy. It will transform the way we will meet our carbon emissions targets. It will transform an industry that is one of the number one polluters in the world. That is in our backyard. It is in my electorate of North West Central, in the Gascoyne. Quite a few companies are looking at and doing the work that will be needed to develop a hydrogen industry in the Gascoyne and midwest. The National Party has a policy to develop a hydrogen hub in the Gascoyne and midwest to take advantage of what we have to offer: clean, green energy. That is not finite. There is an abundance of solar and an abundance of wind, particularly in the Gascoyne and midwest. Yet the government does not see this as an opportunity. Sir Charles Court saw the opportunity back in the 1960s when he developed state agreements for new industries. This state has been very fortunate to have those industries, because they have kept this state afloat and been the real economic driver for Western Australia.

The Premier has been using his spin to say, “How good is the economy! How good are we!” The Premier says that his government has been able to develop 100 000 or 150 000 jobs. Can the Premier detail those jobs and where they are, and how those jobs have come about? I do not want to swear, but as sure as the sun comes up in the morning and sets in the evening, those jobs have been developed by industry and by people like Andrew Forrest. Businesses that have been limited because of the constraints of government have developed those jobs. For this government to take credit for that, I do not think so.

I will end with this. I remember going to a business breakfast just before the 2008 election when the then Premier, Alan Carpenter, held up a photo of the Perth CBD skyline, and he counted 20-something cranes in the air and said, “Look at that! This government is developing Perth! Because of this government, we have got cranes!” Do members know what everyone said? They said, “The government has nothing to do with those cranes; my company is building that building” or, “My company is developing a mine in the north; it has nothing to do with the government.” People are now starting to wake up to that arrogance. Western Australians are concerned that this government, at the stroke of pen, and without any debate in this house, can change policy, change legislation and change the way in which we vote. I say to members opposite: the people of Western Australia are starting to wake up. I think they have woken up. This is the slippery slope that second-term governments always go through. I took forward to coming back to this house early next year and seeing the percentage drop in the swing to the Labor Party, to the point that government backbenchers will start to squirm. If I were a government backbencher, I would be starting to squirm in 2022.

MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) [5.54 pm]: I rise to make a brief contribution in support of the motion that has been presented this evening. I rise to support the motion —

That this house condemns the Labor government for allowing our state to miss opportunities for economic diversification and growth in critical sectors, impacting our long-term future.

I support the many other speakers on this side, or in this corner of the house, who have spoken on the very worthy motion that was put forward by the Leader of the Liberal Party and member for Cottesloe. This motion highlights in particular the missed opportunity and the frustration that we are seeing among the small and medium business sector in particular. That has always been a major concern for us as Liberals, and I think it is fair to speak on behalf of the alliance in that respect as well.

There was a report this week in *The West Australian* on the Western Australian skills shortage and the significant impact that will have on the Western Australian economy. It said that 55 000 more workers are needed to fill the shortfall. This is a major concern right across the state. Chris Rodwell from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry

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of WA has talked about what could happen if the attainment of skilled workers is not supported in this state, and about the structural change that will result from missed opportunities and opportunities going to other states.

The worker shortage also has real implications for small businesses. Already in the electorate of Vasse, which I represent, we are certainly seeing this across the hospitality sector and other sectors. Businesses are now making the difficult but very real decision to simply shut their doors. Recently, Little Fish restaurant in Yallingup closed, and Burger Bones in Busselton closed. Other businesses are restructuring and not opening as often, perhaps only three days a week. We are hearing that restaurants like Wills Domain are finding it increasingly difficult to get staff. Restaurants are obviously investing heavily in trying to get staff. As a consequence of the staff shortages that they are experiencing, they are able to open for only three to four days a week. They are unable to find people who are willing to work in a full-time position to provide that valuable service.

That raises the question again about this government's plan for Western Australia beyond COVID. We on this side of the house have outlined the importance of providing some clarity around what that plan will look like and when it will be safe to open this state. Of course, we know what the real issue is. The issue is obviously that our health system is not as prepared as it should be. That concern was expressed in response to the recent state budget, which had just a 1.38 per cent increase in operational expenditure, and a two per cent drop in health expenditure next year. The fact that the health system has been run down over the first term of the McGowan Labor government raises real questions about why 2 000 elective surgeries have been cancelled over the last two months. At a time when there is no COVID in the community, 2 000 elective surgeries have been cancelled over a two-month period. We have also seen the elective surgery list blow out by 50 per cent, from 19 000 to about 30 000 patients now on the elective surgery waiting list. In particular, those who have been waiting since August and September are experiencing pain and uncertainty. There is always an impact. We have heard of the impacts on livelihoods, but there is also the potential impact on the level of acuity, something the Minister for Health has often talked about. Elective surgery is also what the Liberal Party has understood to be one of the levers that this government will utilise in response to COVID in the community. It therefore raises questions about why the government is restricting and cancelling elective surgery at this time when there is no COVID in the community.

Another issue we have raised is intensive care unit beds. A report was released last week concerning ICU beds. It was concerning to see in the article published in the *Medical Journal of Australia* of 13 October that Western Australia has the lowest number of ICU beds in the country. Our per capita rate of ICU beds, of six per 100 000, falls behind every other state. It can be compared with 10.8 ICU beds per 100 000 people in New South Wales, and is also well below the national average of 8.5 ICU beds per 100 000 people. The Northern Territory has 8.1; Queensland, 7.9; and South Australia, 9.1. As I said, in WA we have just six ICU beds per 100 000 people. It again raises the questions about the extent to which this government has been doing its homework and the level of support the Minister for Health is receiving in terms of investment in our critical care areas and the number of beds in our hospitals. The government has a \$5.6 billion budget surplus, and over 20 months there has been very little COVID in the community. That raises the question of the state's preparedness for if and when COVID comes into the WA community.

The minister and the government have spoken much about relying on surge capacity. The report also points to the fact that relying on surge capacity will lead to lesser patient outcomes. That experience was highlighted in the report. The report pointed to experiences in the United States and Europe and highlighted that relying on surge capacity raises real concerns about the implications for our most vulnerable. Of course, this also raises the question of how we will support other vulnerable patients and those who might need to rely on an ICU. WA's ICU bed capacity is therefore concerning. It also raises the question of why we have the lowest number of available beds per capita in the country. Again, that raises the question of where this government's priorities are on our health preparedness and the state of our health system to fit in with supporting our economy as we go beyond COVID-19.

A great example, often referred to as the canary in the coalmine, is ambulance ramping. We have certainly touched on this a number of times. We know that in the month of August, the state experienced over 6 500 hours of ambulance ramping. By the minister's own measure, that is five to six times greater than a horror story. Ambulance ramping occurs when, due to bed block, hospitals are unable to receive patients, and ambulances are ramped outside hospitals. As highlighted in the Department of Health's annual report, this has also led to priority 1 ambulance response times reaching very concerning levels. The hold-up of ambulances at our hospitals is leading to ambulances being unable to respond, or greatly restricted in responding, to emergencies out in the field. The issue of ambulance ramping, quite obviously, is understood to relate to the ability of our hospitals to accept patients. Statistics also indicate that there has been a consistent growth in the number of patients presenting to emergency departments, and that is also backed up by the Australian Medical Association and the Australian Nursing Federation. However, it is the capacity for patients to be accepted into hospitals that has resulted in the ambulance ramping situation, which is seeing patients increasingly being left waiting either in hallways with paramedics or in ambulances because they cannot be accepted by hospitals. I had a quick look and saw that this month there has already been over 3 000 hours of ramping, which is another staggering figure, given that 1 030 hours was a crisis and a horror story when the minister was in opposition.

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The government's response to this has been to try to stop these figures being reported. Obviously, we have raised concerns during the inquiry into this area. We know that it will be considered by government, but it points to the challenges our health system is facing and that it is quite obviously in crisis. It raises the question of the extent to which the lack of preparedness in our health system is holding this state back from having a clear plan going forward beyond COVID and beyond managing COVID. That is what the Leader of the Opposition in this place was asking for today in question time. It was disappointing to, once again, get political spin from the Premier in response to that question.

I will wrap up; I understand we will allow time for the government to respond. I will touch finally on the Western Australian Auditor General's report *Roll-out of state COVID-19 stimulus initiatives: July 2020–March 2021*, which was released today. This stimulus package had bipartisan support for the benefits that it would obviously bring to the WA economy by supporting WA businesses and the community during this challenging time of COVID. However, what I thought was quite stunning is that 47 per cent of the initiatives have not substantially used their allocated budgets. Of the total \$2.144 billion budget, 61 per cent was delivered through 30 initiatives, the vast majority as financial relief to citizens. For a number of reasons outlined in the report, this means that approximately \$800 million remains unspent. That raises concerns. The report highlights —

Of particular concern are the Department of Communities' social housing initiatives, which as of 31 March 2021, only ... (2%) of the \$319 million budget was spent.

That is an extraordinary figure. It is a lacklustre reflection of an initiative that should have been delivered with gusto. The Auditor General went on to state —

This leads me to a key recommendation of the report. When deciding on any future stimulus funding and relief measures, State government entities should consider predictable events in their planning such as market limitations (including reduced contractor and builder availability.) It's also important they improve their planning and coordination when initiatives are competing with one another, as is the case with social housing ...

We know the opportunity lost here is the taxpayers of Western Australia. This report is certainly very damning. It brings me back to the original motion that was moved by the Leader of the Liberal Party relating to economic diversification and supporting the diversification of critical sectors. That can happen only through the support of such initiatives, which we have not seen, and also by ensuring that our health system is as good as it can be. Unfortunately, not just during its first term, but also in response to the recent budget, the government's lacklustre recruitment drive of health workers is an indicator that illustrates the health system is in crisis without COVID in the community. This points to the fact that this government has dropped the ball in these key areas.

MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade) [6.11 pm]: Madam Acting Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak on this motion. Of course, it is a motion that we will be strenuously opposing. Perhaps I am a bit naive—I have been in government for only five years—but I always thought that if a member brought a motion to this place, they would speak to it if they wanted to get the support of the majority of members. What we have seen today is simply a passing parade of debates past, and language, narrative and lines used in another context, in another time and in another place that bear no resemblance to this debate. It is extraordinary that we had such a flaccid effort on what is a very important issue—that is, the diversity of the Western Australian economy so that we can take advantage of the incredible strength we have because of our COVID-19 response. We are all looking forward to the economic reset that will ultimately occur when our international border opens. We will then have the opportunities that come with the greater movement of the workforce, the greater movement of trade and, in tandem with that, the new reality of the decarbonisation of our economies. These are exciting times. There are important decisions to be made. I thought it extraordinary and thoroughly disappointing that the opposition, while bringing an important issue to this place, failed almost to a man and a woman to speak to it.

I want to take the opportunity in the time we have available to talk about some of the initiatives and the approach of the government when it comes to the diversification of our economy. I have said on multiple occasions that we need to diversify our markets and we need to diversify our commodities. We need to make sure that we can develop other economic activities and sell them to a broader range of international markets. The government's plan for a strong and diversified economy is about delivering secure, quality jobs through increased investment across a broad range of industries. This vision was articulated in the *Diversify WA* report, which we released in July 2019 and which was since revised in 2020. It sets out how we will go about pivoting from the global pandemic to take advantage of the opportunities that come with that. That is about making sure that as a government, we have a competitive advantage in some priority sectors, we focus on them and we start to nurture and really foster those particular priorities to ensure that we can take advantage of the opportunities and jobs that come with them. They are essentially energy; tourism, events and creative industries; primary industries; international education; mining and mining engineering and technical services; defence industry; space; and health and medical life sciences. The

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Diversify WA report also emphasises the importance of cross-sector activities in science, innovation and technology, advanced manufacturing, supply chain development, environmental science and governance frameworks.

We know that in the future, as we seek to grow our economies, it will have to be off the back of the new reality of net zero emissions. We have to make sure that we can decarbonise our economy and take advantage of the industries that will grow from that. Some members opposite spoke about the opportunities that will come from hydrogen, both blue and green, into the future. That is one of the reasons we have a minister specifically titled and responsible for developing our hydrogen industry.

Mr V.A. Catania: Only in title, nothing of substance, or you wouldn't have lost this major hydrogen deal for Western Australia.

Mr R.H. COOK: I thought it was extraordinary that the member for North West Central spoke about the Carpenter government in such disparaging terms, given that he was a member of that government and, one assumes, supported it.

Mr V.A. Catania: Yes, and left straightaway—left to the right.

Mr R.H. COOK: No, the member did not. I remember there was a period when we were in opposition and the member was in our caucus. I was fresh to the caucus at that stage. When I came in, I thought we were working together as a team. I could not understand how just about every decision, deliberation and debate in our caucus managed to find its way into the media. It was immensely frustrating that there were clearly elements within our caucus that were seeking to undermine by virtue of underhanded, distrustful activities and going to the media. It was extraordinary that just after the member for North West Central left our ranks, not a word got into the media from there on. It was a unified party room; everyone trusted each other and everyone was confident that the issues we discussed never came out.

Point of Order

Dr D.J. HONEY: Members are not to make personal reflections on the character of other members in this place, as the minister is clearly doing. He is clearly making an egregious personal accusation. The other side will not tolerate that from this side and the minister would know that.

Mr S.A. Millman interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms R.S. Stephens): Member for Mount Lawley! I give the call to the Deputy Premier.

Debate Resumed

Mr R.H. COOK: The member for Cottesloe is drawing the link between leaks from the Labor caucus back in 2008 and 2009 and the member for North West Central leaving it. I will leave that for the member for Cottesloe to analyse, and thank him for providing more colour and interest to that particular issue.

I was grateful to the Minister for Mines and Petroleum, who reminded us that the final words of the member for North West Central's inaugural speech to this place were that Western Australia does not need royalties for regions.

I am thankful for the commentary from the member for Cottesloe when he discussed the role of green hydrogen, the importance of decarbonising our economy and the role it will play in making sure that we get to net zero emissions. I assume that the member for Cottesloe sought permission from the Nationals WA to make those comments, because we know that the National Party does not move; in fact, it is riddled with absolute policy paralysis, because our friends in the National Party refuse to accept that climate change is real. I cannot work out why the member for North West Central would come into this place and spout the importance of green hydrogen when his party does not believe in climate change.

Point of Order

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade is mocking the Nationals WA's policy of net zero emissions by 2050. That is WA policy, minister. Do not come here and mislead this house that the National Party does not have a policy on net zero emissions.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms R.S. Stephens): Member for North West Central, there is no point of order. I just remind the opposition, you have your —

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for North West Central! You have had your time.

Debate Resumed

Mr R.H. COOK: That was quite the time, too, Acting Speaker. As members are aware, we have strong ambitions for green hydrogen in this state, as we need to embrace energy transition, which is the reason we have a range of funds in place to support the diversification of our economy. They include the \$100 million investment attraction and new

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industries fund, which is an important way in which we can leverage our private investment to make sure that we can continue to realise the opportunities going forward, and the \$50 million industrial land development fund. We have funding of \$105 million to build a state-of-the-art film studio in Fremantle. We are establishing the WA jobs task force and funding international students post the COVID-19 pandemic. In manufacturing, we have a \$15 million local manufacturing and investment fund and \$2 million to support the global advanced manufacturing hub. We are building railcars and, once again, bringing heavy train manufacturing back to Western Australia after it was killed by the Court government. We have \$90 million for green steel research. In renewables, we have an investment of \$350 million to significantly expand the softwood plantation estates. We heard bizarre contributions from the members for Moore and Roe on stopping the further desecration of our native forests, which are our most important carbon sinks.

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for North West Central!

Mr R.H. COOK: It was extraordinary that there was a critique of our \$50 million transition fund to make sure that those in the timber industry can continue to maintain their jobs and their industry and see great opportunities in softwoods. Of course, the only people who undermined the softwood industry were those opposite. We have \$8 million to support the development of a wind turbine manufacturing industry, and, of course, we introduced the container deposit scheme, which is doing more to make sure that we can protect the environment. We are doing more and more each week and each month to make sure that we continue to diversify our economy. We have the opportunity of a lifetime—an opportunity that is generational in how we move forward in our post-COVID-19 experience. It is an opportunity we have to take and it is an opportunity we are taking by making sure that we look at the growth of industries such as space—Western Australia's first satellite was recently launched—and tourism, and making sure that we can bring interstate and international tourists back to Western Australia in a post-COVID-19 environment. Thank God for the McGowan government so that they will have old-growth forests to visit when they come to this state.

I want to talk briefly about the efforts that we have gone to to generate jobs in the regions. I was recently in Kalgoorlie to attend one of the communication forums, which are about making sure that local firms have the opportunity to benefit from the \$30 billion contracts that the government leads each year. From both the Western Australian Jobs Act and the local capability fund, which assists local businesses to increase their capability and competitiveness, we have seen over 100 000 jobs leveraged from the government spend into the regions of Western Australia to make sure that local businesses can get those contracts. I had the great experience of going to the communications forum, at which we were able to see local businesses engaging with government public servants about the opportunities that were coming up and therefore the opportunities that they will have to pitch for those jobs. We are seeing opportunities in manufacturing, hydrogen, tourism, science, life sciences and mining equipment, technology and services right across our economy, and we have the funds in place to make sure that we can continue to invest in those and to encourage people to invest in their businesses so that they can continue to grow the jobs that come with them.

There is so much more we could discuss, but, in the limited time we have available, I am very keen to hear from other members, so I will conclude my remarks. I will just say that what we have heard from the opposition today is just a rehash of old speeches related to other completely different debates. No speaker addressed the issue of the diversification of our economy. We can tell that the opposition has no ideas. All members opposite do is criticise the government's efforts to manage COVID-19, criticise our efforts to grow our economy despite the constraints around workforce and international borders that come with that, and take the opportunity to try to divide the community through their negative commentary, while at all times overlooking the fact that there are great opportunities in both regional and metropolitan Western Australia for people to get jobs. That is the reason we now have the lowest unemployment rates in the country.

MS J.L. HANNS (Collie–Preston) [6.27 pm]: I rise in staunch opposition to this motion tonight. I must say, to begin with, I was not sure I had put my hand up to speak to the right private members' business motion, because I am here to talk about the opportunities for economic diversification and growth in critical industries. Obviously, I could talk for about 23 hours about the opportunities that this McGowan Labor government has created for these critical sectors. I am going to use Collie as a case study in this particular example. Certainly, going forward, one of the most critical sectors into our future will be that of energy. As members know, Collie's past has been a focus on coal mining and power stations. Governments right around the world are moving their focuses onto lower carbon intensive industries and away from fossil fuels, and Collie is captured in that challenge and change.

As we know, the change in the energy sector has been caused in part by a massive uptake in rooftop solar. In response to this, the government was prompted to make, and in fact was very proactive about making, that decision to transition away from coal and fossil fuels to renewable energy. It did so in a way that was supportive of the Collie community, because it is well aware of the implications for that community. I can say that this McGowan Labor government is absolutely committed to a just transition for my community and for the community in the broader South West Region. I have outlined previously—I will not go back through all this—the just transition process for Collie and the south west. Suffice to say that it involves, as I have said, government; it involves unions; it involves, very importantly,

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the employers who employ the workers who will be affected by these changes; and, really importantly, it involves the community in this conversation about what our future looks like.

Support from the McGowan Labor government was committed at the previous election, in 2017, to the tune of \$80 million for the Collie industry attraction fund and Collie Futures development fund, with an additional \$20 million in this budget. This shows that the McGowan Labor government is committed to providing support for workers, the community and the broader south west region. That stands in very stark contrast—I will use the term “thought bubble” because it has been used by the opposition tonight—to the opposition’s thought bubble around its plan for Collie. The Liberal Party’s plan for Collie included the shutdown of power stations by 2025, effectively scrapping overnight my community and many within the south west. The member for Cottesloe stood at a press conference in Perth eight months ago behind the former Leader of the Opposition, Zak Kirkup, announcing the end of Collie. I stood, in stark contrast, with the former member for Collie—Preston, Hon Mick Murray, with hundreds of workers and local business owners, calling out the opposition on its reckless energy policy.

I want to talk a little bit about what this government has done around the Collie Futures program and the Collie industry attraction strategy that has been implemented. Tourism was certainly a unique and probably, five years ago, a surprising industry when we were talking about Collie, given that our track record was in mining and power stations. Tourism and the initiatives that this government has introduced have been wildly successful, so much so that I would like to highlight a particular problem that I am very pleased to have: I no longer can find a parking space in the main street when I am trying to go to the bakery. I also cannot believe the number of people who have visited our region. Our tourist numbers have doubled since this time last year.

Mr S.A. Millman: Infiltrate, infiltrate!

Ms J.L. HANNS: They can happily infiltrate Collie!

I would also like to highlight that many of those people drive into our community with mountain bikes on the backs of their cars. One of the strategies that this government has implemented includes a \$10 million investment in world-class mountain biking trails. Again, I could go on. I will talk about Hon Mick Murray’s favourite project, which is Lake Kepwari. It took 20 years of hard work to get it over the line, again supported by this government around diversifying our economy.

On industry, there are lots of things I could discuss, but I would like to draw our attention in this chamber to a document that has been released and I am very proud to have been part of its release last week, *Welcome to Collie: Your investment destination*. It is a prospectus that sells Collie to the world and the eastern states. It is absolutely a showcase of what my region has to offer.

The foreword was put together by the Premier. I would like to highlight a couple of comments he made —

As the Western Australian and global economies move to minimise greenhouse gas emissions, the Collie region’s transition is attracting investment from the private sector and government, presenting a significant and unique opportunity for business investment.

He goes on to talk about —

The Western Australian Government has invested significantly in the region and formed an alliance —

That is the one I spoke about earlier —

with industry, community and workers’ unions to encourage ... a Just Transition for Collie.

I would also like to point out the fact that there are some very good reasons why people would invest in this region, in Collie in particular. Again, the government has done some incredible work around that. Projects are already happening in my region. I highlight that we have a very supportive political and business environment for the future of these industries. We have a very agile and highly skilled workforce within Collie and the south west region, which bodes very well for looking into these opportunities for economic diversification.

I would like to outline a couple of future clean energy projects. One project that this government is looking at and has supported through the Collie industry attraction fund is an allocation to International Graphite. International Graphite is a company that was given \$2 million through the Collie industry attraction fund. It is the first graphite processing plant to be built in Collie. The idea is that this project will be phased in over a number of stages. The foundation stage is expected to build 40 full-time jobs within the Collie region, which is a fantastic step towards diversifying our economy. In case members are not aware, the plant will see the manufacture of graphite products for new technologies including mobile phones, computers, high-pressure sealants and fire-retardant building materials. It is also going to be used to process graphite to produce anode material for lithium-ion batteries. It is part of that very critical chain of the emerging battery industry in Western Australia.

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I would also like to talk about a couple of other opportunities around economic diversification within this prospectus, one being manufacturing. We have fire truck manufacturing occurring within Collie. Frontline Fire and Rescue Equipment was given a grant under the Collie industry attraction fund. It is set up in Perth and has a satellite facility in Collie. The idea is that it will build fire trucks in the regions and within Collie. Collicrete is another project I would love to highlight. If I had more time, I would go into much more detail. The other focus areas are around primary industries. Protected cropping is one example and Cannaponics is another fabulous example of opportunities within primary industries to produce medicinal-grade cannabis.

As I said, I could go on and on, but, essentially, I would like to highlight this prospectus. It outlines very clearly the commitment of the McGowan Labor government around economic diversification into critical industries that will support jobs and growth into the future, not just for Collie, but for Western Australia. If that is not economic diversification in these sectors, I suggest that I go back to school. Given that I have spent a good part of 40 years at school, I think I stand in good stead to be able to say that if I could amend this motion, I would say that this house should celebrate and promote the opportunities for economic diversification and for growth in critical sectors and, therefore, secure the long-term future of Western Australia.

MRS L.M. O'MALLEY (Bicton) [6.37 pm]: It gives me great pleasure to speak against this nonsense motion and to challenge the confused and contradictory contributions of the members opposite. Unlike those members, I will speak to the actual motion. In doing so, I am also very pleased to have the opportunity to place on the record just some of the many ways in which the McGowan Labor government has delivered and is continuing to deliver on a diversified Western Australian economy. I am really confused about why the motion is before us because, quite frankly, it is a gift for us government members to highlight the many ways in which this government is contributing to the diversification of our economy. So, I thank the opposition for bringing forward the motion.

A commitment we made on first coming to government in 2017—one that we are progressing, despite a global pandemic and those who would oppose such action to address it—was to the diversification of our economy. The McGowan government's commitment to the diversification of our economy through investment in initiatives, which I and my colleagues have gone into in some detail—as will the member to follow me—refutes the frankly ridiculous claims of members opposite. Before I do that, I would like to share some personal reflections on the contributions of members opposite as they relate to the pressures of finding people to fill vacant positions across all sectors and the need to both keep our workforce safe and expand our workforce. I am quite confused and curious about whether members opposite support vaccination and whether they support the hard border, or a border arrangement of any kind staying in place until we get to a safe level of community vaccination. It seems that, from some of the contributions of members earlier, they are not making a clear statement about it. It is very confusing. On one hand, they talk about the need to not mandate vaccination of the workforce, but, on the other hand, they are saying we do not have enough workers in the state so we need to somehow get in more workers. Opposition members really seem at odds with their own position on vaccination. That is a real concern for the people of this state and it reflects very clearly why this government was elected in March 2021 with such a massive majority. The Liberal and National Parties have not been clear about their position and policies, if they actually have any policies. I am still confused about whether they have any policies and I know that I am not the only one confused by their position on these matters. Pandemics require decisive action and leadership. I know that I speak on behalf of my constituency of Bicton and a massive majority of Western Australians when I say thank you to Premier Mark McGowan and the cabinet ministers for showing real leadership and making the hard decisions to keep our state safe and thriving during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

The McGowan government is investing in new industries, such as battery technology, life sciences, film and others, and in the expansion of existing industries, such as tourism, and Indigenous economic opportunities to support active involvement with Aboriginal communities and business to ensure that Aboriginal people and their businesses are part of emerging and existing industries.

The future of sustainable energy production and the green jobs that will be, and already have been, created is wonderfully illustrative of the McGowan government's commitment to the ongoing economic diversification of this state. We in WA are blessed with an abundance of sun, wind and minerals and capturing those energy production pathways through new battery production will be game changing. The government is supporting this technology with the release of its Future Battery Industry Strategy, a \$13.2 million incentive program to make cathode active materials, and \$6 million to support the Future Battery Industries Cooperative Research Centre, which is further evidence of our action for a cleaner, greener future for WA.

In the time I have left, I will focus on the \$6 million of funding to the Future Battery Industries Cooperative Research Centre. The FBICRC is enabling the growth of battery industries to power Australia's future from here in Western Australia. It brings together industry, researchers, governments and the community to ensure that WA plays a leading role in the global battery revolution. It is an independent centre at which industry, government and researchers come together to create the tools, technologies and skills to grow the role of battery storage in Australia's electricity grids and make Australia a larger player in global battery value chains. As I said, the centre

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is a Western Australian-based company, supported by this government. The reason that I highlight this company in particular is that partnership and collaboration with private industry is a hallmark feature of this government. We are very, very aware that private industry cannot do everything in isolation, nor can government, and that is why we come together on these important initiatives and fund these important growing economies. Obviously, we are growing our economy and, in so doing, we are growing Western Australian jobs.

It is clear that the McGowan government is diversifying the state economy and it is doing this whilst also acknowledging and supporting the incredibly important role of the resource sector now and into the future. Through energy, climate action, tourism, culture and small business, the Western Australian economy is set to be even more diverse and thriving, an economy that is both green and securing the safe and expanded employment of Western Australian workers into the future.

I would like to highlight a couple of key areas because they are important to people in my electorate of Bicton, and that tells me in no uncertain terms that a green future is the future they want. The government's energy policy and the climate action it is taking include the green jobs plan, which will deliver significant green jobs as part of the WA recovery plan and help to boost the state's economic recovery from COVID-19. The green jobs plan is an investment of \$60.3 million in conservation and environment projects across the state. The plan will create more than 1 000 conservation jobs to improve native vegetation and conservation outcomes whilst further positioning the state for economic recovery over the next three years.

There are many initiatives, but I just do not have the time to talk about them all because I want to let my colleague the member for Mount Lawley get to his feet to have his say. I will try to encapsulate the important key points, one of which is our green schools policy—a policy that I am particularly excited about—which was announced by Minister Ellery. Many schools in the electorate of Bicton have already installed rooftop solar panels. Schools in Palmyra, Melville, Bicton and East Fremantle have installed solar panels, either through this initiative or as a result of election commitments I made prior to the 2017 and 2021 state elections. Solar panels make such a difference to our schools at a direct level; indeed, in some cases they are running cost positive and not just cost neutral. That is a really exciting initiative.

We have already heard about native forest logging, which is another really important initiative for my constituents of Bicton. We recently made the historical move to decisively protect our native forests. We are not just stopping something; we are also helping something to grow—pardon the pun!—with our investment in the transition into softwoods and supporting that growth. I did it again; I am so good at this!

Mr S.A. Millman: You're on a roll!

Mrs L.M. O'MALLEY: Yes. I will branch out a bit!

That is such an exciting and important step for the future of our state. It will ensure that there are sustainable jobs into the future, which is incredibly important.

Tourism and culture is another important area. The government is investing \$105 million to build a state-of-the-art production studio in the neighbouring electorate of Fremantle. The film studio will be accompanied by a \$20 million screen production attraction fund to attract job-creating productions to Western Australia. The film studio will be situated at Victoria Quay in Fremantle and will include purpose-built sound-resistant stages, and other onsite facilities such as offices, construction space and parking. It will breathe life back into Fremantle and, as I and many of my constituents say, greater Fremantle, which expands to Bicton and beyond.

I will finish on a topic that is very close to my heart as a family business owner, although my husband obviously does all the work! Recently this year, the Premier, and the Minister for Small Business, Minister Whitby, announced a new small business boost. The policy will provide \$3 000 small business lockdown grants to support the WA businesses most impacted by the recent circuit-breaker four-day lockdowns and interim restrictions. The state government committed \$41.5 million for the new grants, which are open to businesses that have an Australia-wide payroll. Members can look at the policy for further details. The important point is that this government understands the importance of partnership with the private sector, and that is the private sector big and small, from the largest corporations throughout the resource sector down to the small hairdressing salons and cafes in Bicton. It goes without saying, but I will say it again: I absolutely oppose this ridiculous and nonsensical motion.

MR S.A. MILLMAN (Mount Lawley — Parliamentary Secretary) [6.49 pm]: I rise to make a contribution in the time that remains on this debate. I noted just how enthusiastically the members for Collie–Preston and Bicton jumped to their feet to make contributions on the ways in which the McGowan Labor government is diversifying the economy. The Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade and my colleagues the members for Collie–Preston and Bicton all highlighted a point that I will make as well: that we on this side of the chamber are speaking to the substance of this motion.

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When this motion landed on the notice paper, I looked forward to a discussion and debate about renewable energy, international education, agriculture and agribusiness, hydrogen, future batteries, new markets, medical technology, research, space technology, and defence—any of these things—but by the time we got to the end of opposition members' contributions, we heard the member for North West Central complaining about voting systems. Opposition members were so short on material that they could not even speak to the substance of the motion.

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

Mr S.A. MILLMAN: I was here the whole time, member, and, when I was not here, I was standing in the hallway having a cup of tea, watching the member's lamentable contribution on the screen!

Not satisfied with the loss of their identity at the last state election, opposition members present their speeches as though they are the parties of small business, farmers or miners. They are not the parties of the miners; they are the parties of the underminers! All they do is come in here and undermine! The member for Moore comes in here, quotes conservative commentators and undermines our vaccination efforts and our health response. All the member for Vasse does is undermine our professional health workforce, which is delivering a world-class health system.

The member for Cottesloe talks down our brilliant plans for hydrogen. We have a Minister for Hydrogen Industry, we have a plan for hydrogen, and we wanted to talk about it. We wanted to have a debate. The member for Cottesloe points to one project and says that is it. Does the member know what? He lauds the effort of the New South Wales government in attracting hydrogen investment with its \$3 billion contribution. Let me tell members this: the Western Australian government is focusing on fiscal responsibility. We have a budget surplus this year and we are paying down debt. The New South Wales state government's deficit this year is \$9 billion and will rise to \$120 billion.

Then we have the underminer for North West Central talking down our police and talking down our tourism sector. The government is saying, "We can't wait to welcome more tourists into Western Australia. We want to see tourists visiting all of the wonderful offerings we have in Collie, Fremantle, the south west, the north west, the Kimberley and all over our great state. We want to see as many tourists as possible." Then we heard the Freudian slip from the member for North West Central. Do members know what he calls tourists? He calls them infiltrators! That discloses to everyone exactly what he thinks about tourists and reveals his true nature. We on this side of the chamber are in favour of tourism, and we see tourism as being an important part of diversifying our economy, even though members on the opposition benches do not agree with us.

We have to feel sorry for them; part of me feels sorry for them. I know that I should not, because I have listened to their contributions, but I think to myself "Their philosophy is redundant. Their arguments are incoherent." COVID-19 is one of the greatest existential challenges the global community and society has ever faced, and it is really putting the acid test on different ideologies. In the same way that World War I was the end of imperialism and World War II was the end of fascism, COVID-19 has called into question the hyper-individualism and neoliberalism of the conservative parties. The philosophical, societal and community response to COVID that has been succeeding is ours—one built on fairness, equality and community, and the conservatives stand condemned. When the people of Western Australia went to the polls in the March 2021 state election, they chose the things that WA Labor stands for. The opposition is left in a situation in which it does not know what it stands for. Just as the Deputy Premier said, members opposite came in here with a parade of complaints but no unifying theme. We do not know what they stand for; on one hand, they want more money spent, but on the other, they say we are spending too much.

I will tell members what we stand for: we stand for the best interests of Western Australia. We stand for critical sectors of the economy. When I am here representing the people of the electorate of Mount Lawley, the critical sectors of the economy include things like health, education and training, community safety, management of finances, building infrastructure, tourism, and the creative industries that both the member for Bicton and the Minister for Culture and the Arts spoke about during question time today. What an incredible investment—\$105 million for a new studio in Fremantle to unleash the creativity of Western Australia's talented artists.

I also think of the return of railcar manufacturing in Bellevue and the manufacturing of fire appliances down in Collie. It is incredible that the opposition had the temerity to bring this motion to this chamber today to talk about investing in new industries, because today marks four years to the day that Holden stopped manufacturing cars in Australia. It is four years to the day since the federal National and Liberal parties destroyed a fantastic sovereign industry after Joe Hockey dared it to walk out of the country, and it did. Yet the state Liberal and National Parties come in here and have the temerity to say, "We know how to invest." I was flabbergasted when I saw the motion on the notice paper. I thought, "How's the audacity? How's the arrogance? Just unbelievable." Then I thought to myself, "What do they stand for? Who do they represent?"

When I was growing up, I always thought that the old Country Party, now National Party, represented farmers; today I saw this article by Keane Bourke in ABC online news: "WA farmers push back against Nationals' lack of climate commitment", and I thought, "The National Party has lost its way." It is really sad to see. One would think that regional people are entitled to representation, but the article states —

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A group of Western Australian farmers have become champions for Australia's path to net zero emissions, saying urgent action is needed.

It appears increasingly likely Prime Minister Scott Morrison will commit Australia to reaching net zero emissions by 2050 at the COP26 Climate Summit in Glasgow.

I will pause there to say that I am sure the commonwealth government must have dislocated something after its radical backflip on climate change. Eight and a half years of inaction, and now all of a sudden, with an election in the offing, it has done an incredible backflip; or rather, it is hoping to, if it is not held to ransom by the National Party.

The article continues —

But he has so far failed to secure the support of the Nationals, after a marathon party room meeting on Sunday failed to bring them onboard.

Corrigin farmer Simon Wallwork is the chair of Ag Zero 2030, a group of farmers concerned about climate change who are trying to help lead the industry's response to it.

He is frustrated by the way the federal National party has approached the issue.

“The Nationals supposedly represent farmers, but if they represented farmers then they’d be well on top of this issue some time ago,” he said.

Here is a hint, conservative parties: take your lead from the people you are supposed to represent. Go and speak to them, go and see what their issues are, and then you might get some idea about what is important and what you should be bringing before this chamber. Then you can pick up the phone and call people like David Littleproud, Keith Pitt and all the others in the National Party room who are holding this up and say to them, “We are getting crucified in WA. Our base is abandoning us.” Then all you will be left with will be your rabid anti-vaxxers and other assorted nut jobs. The article continues —

But Mr Morrison on Sunday confirmed he would not be updating Australia’s target of a 26 per cent reduction over the next eight years.

...

Over the 18 years Mr Wallwork and his wife have been farming, they have noticed a significant change in the climate around their 3,700-hectare property —

I will skip ahead because I want to get to one of my key points, and that is the effect of markets. I miss having Institute of Public Affairs stalwarts like Hon Mike Nahan and Colin Barnett in here, advancing a neoliberal agenda, because at least we knew what they stood for. If the opposition is concerned about the effect of markets, it should look at what Mr Wallwork states in this article —

“We’re getting indications or signals from our key markets that they want agriculture to be doing its bit and that means supplying carbon-neutral produced products,” Mr Wallwork said.

“Our banks are indicating that sustainability, in terms of how we operate our business, will become increasingly important in the flow of finance and pricing of finance to run our businesses.

“That’s a worldwide sort of movement.”

He was also concerned farmers could eventually be affected by a European Union carbon levy, which is expected to see the profits of businesses exporting commodities like aluminium plummet when it comes into effect later this decade.

“Initially that seems to include things like steel, but ultimately could include agriculture exports as well,” Mr Wallwork said.

The EU —

This is critical because I heard the member for Roe talk about free trade agreements —

has also indicated that a free trade deal with Australia is unlikely to be signed until Australia does more to reduce its emissions.

Please, please, please, National Party, do what you can to persuade your federal counterparts that they are on the losing side on this issue. They are on the wrong side of history.

Then I thought about what else was going on in Parliament today. I thought about the Liberal Party of old—the Liberal Party that used to triumph and champion the ideas of the rule of law and law and order. I listened to Hon Peter Collier in the upper house undermining our meth action plan and criticising our frontline police. I thought to myself, “This is an outrageous slur.” Some members might have been in the chamber yesterday when I was speaking

Extract from *Hansard*

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Dr David Honey; Mr Shane Love; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Roger Cook;
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about the rise of right-wing extremists. I congratulate the Western Australia Police Force for the arrests made today for the racist and anti-Semitic graffiti and posters that were distributed through the northern beachside suburbs. Our WA police are doing an incredible job and they should not be undermined by the likes of Hon Peter Collier who criticised them for tackling meth. The Liberal Party of old would have been on our side on these issues of law and order. It would have been with us on community safety. But, instead, the Liberal Party is undermining us once again.

Then I think about what happened with the federal former Attorney General, Christian Porter, in the commonwealth Parliament today. It is incredible. It is unprecedented. The Speaker of the House of Representatives said that there is a *prima facie* case to refer Christian Porter to the Standing Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests for his \$1 million blind trust. Every time an issue like this has arisen in the past, this happens. The federal Speaker made a representation to the chamber and the federal government refused to refer him.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

House adjourned at 7.00 pm
