

PREMIER'S STATEMENT

Consideration

Resumed from 14 August on the following question —

That the Premier's Statement be noted.

MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury) [8.39 pm]: I rise to speak to the Premier's Statement of February 2018. It has been a long time since February 2018 and all I can say is what a wonderful year it has been! It has been absolutely fantastic. This is very much a bit of a hindsight commentary as responses to the Premier's Statement usually occur at the beginning of the year. It is a delightful point in the year to actually be able to stand and speak about not only the agenda that the Premier set out but also how the government has tracked through 2018.

In February 2018, the Premier set out the government's agenda for the year. It was clear, simple and unambiguous. It was an agenda to build confidence in the future of the state. It was an agenda to grow jobs, to provide certainty for investment and to create opportunity. It was an agenda for a Western Australia where people can find a good job and feel secure and valued in that job, and have faith that their children will experience the same. That is what the Premier said. It is a restatement of what we on this side stand for and the values that drive us—that is, confidence in the future, confidence in the people of Western Australia, and confidence in the principles of fairness and inclusion.

There was something else in the Premier's Statement. It was a small thing but it made such a significant difference. It was something that recognises our collective history as a nation that goes back thousands of years—it was the acknowledgement of country. This year in this place we started to acknowledge country at the commencement of each day, and that makes a difference. Sometimes the small things we do make a big difference. At this year's reconciliation march in Bunbury, I told members of the Noongar community who live in my electorate of this acknowledgement and the respect for culture and the people who sit behind it. We often forget that acknowledgement of country is about showing respect for traditional knowledge held by elders and passed on to each generation. For people travelling through country, it was the start of a conversation about what to watch out for, what is safe, what is not, and where water and food might be found. Acknowledgement is about demonstrating our care for each other but, more importantly, it is also about learning from history and tradition. That is something that opposition members often forget, particularly for our financial position. I intend to reflect more fully on the opposition's unwillingness to embrace history. That is what the Premier did, though, when he acknowledged country, and it was not a hard thing to do.

We are fortunate that Bunbury is host to the Noongar Language Centre and employs two out of the five Aboriginal linguists who are working nationally to preserve language. They have worked to build a vocabulary in our region that covers 200 years of recent language and are linking language and culture. I cannot emphasise enough from my point of view how important that is. I know that the member for Kimberley, who is in the chamber tonight, would absolutely endorse those views from a Kimberley perspective. The language centre has built a network of global linguists specialising in Indigenous language revival and with it a new sense of pride in heritage and a connection to culture. We often forget, in terms of our interpretation of culture, the culture that exists from traditional Aboriginal people and from traditional Aboriginal communities. The language centre is taking a message out that culture is more than important; it defines who we are. The language centre is making a difference. I make these points because in talking about the progress and growth of our state and of my own electorate of Bunbury as a regional city, we cannot do this unless we recognise and include the people who were here before us and embrace people on their terms in a respectful manner. We need to build our future based on fairness, inclusiveness and mutual respect. People are at the core of the work of this place, and in the rush of blood that is politics, we should not forget inclusion, fairness and opportunity. These are important values that are front and centre in the Premier's Statement.

Replying to the Premier's Statement at the end of the year has the benefit of hindsight. It is more like a report card than a sharing of vision. What a year it has been. The economy is improving. As the Treasurer said recently, unemployment is down from 6.3 per cent when the government was elected to 5.7 per cent. Full-time employment is rapidly increasing. The domestic economy has expanded by 1.1 per cent and we are in a growth period. Alongside the significant improvement in the state's economy, there are the state's finances. The forecast operating deficit has significantly reduced and expenses growth is on a planned trajectory to recover. The government has successfully built a relationship with the commonwealth on the GST and top-up infrastructure payments. I note that the electorate of Bunbury, as well as the electorates of Murray–Wellington and Collie–Preston, are set to benefit from some of that, with the construction of the Bunbury Outer Ring Road. Expenses have been controlled and the revenue base is increasing. It is a pretty simple formula.

At a broader level, economic indicators show a gradual return of confidence in the state. Average annual state demand is back in positive territory and business investment is improving. I cannot help but recall the big picture

in the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia magazine of the Treasurer and the budget saying “the budget we love”. Job vacancies are on the increase and there is some level of optimism that things are at last changing in the retail sector.

In the south west, Bankwest economist Alan Langford has been upbeat about the future of the south west’s economy. He noted —

“The South West economy is steadily gathering momentum as, among other factors, the all-too-often downplayed importance of the production phase of the resources boom becomes more apparent by the week,” ...

He said that was aided and abetted by a competitive Australian dollar. Wherever we look, there is evidence of an energetic and enthusiastic government that is getting on with the job of following through on its commitments. Whether it is legislation reforming important areas of law such as redress for victims of institutional child sexual abuse, strata titles reform, local government reform or taxi reform, this government has found a pathway. More recently, there have been the really difficult challenges associated with the discussion and the introduction of legislation around assisted dying and the debate we have had about fracking and the commitment that this government has made in terms of finding a pathway through a difficult community issue. This government has found a pathway that is sensible, fair and balances the needs as far as it is possible to do so of varying interests in the community.

In the past month the government has delivered final state approvals for the Albemarle project. That is something the member for Murray–Wellington and I are very pleased about. Subject to federal approval and final sign-off by the Albemarle board, this project will signal a new wave of manufacturing for Bunbury and the south west. I have to say that this was one of the fastest approvals processes that I saw in my 30-odd years in the state public sector prior to coming into this place. It was a commitment to meeting the needs of the market and the potential opportunity but it was without compromising the approvals process in itself.

Albemarle is a company with a long history extending back to 1887. Starting out as a paper manufacturer, it diversified into fuel additives and then speciality chemicals. It is a company with a long heritage and a great tradition. It is highly adaptable to new market opportunities and new technologies, and it has a passionate and strong value base that embraces notions of care, courage, curiosity, humility, collaboration, integrity and transparency. Those are important values and we welcome companies with those sorts of value frameworks into our region. I am sure this will make a significant and positive difference to not only the south west but also Western Australia.

On construction, the Albemarle Kemerton plant will be the largest lithium hydroxide plant globally. This government has the vision to build on that through creating a task force to explore and research the opportunities for further manufacturing associated with battery technologies and electricity storage. Bunbury is the state’s second largest city and will also be the epicentre of lithium and its contribution to energy storage technology. While this is going on, the government, in partnership with community, business and unions, is examining opportunities for broader manufacturing in the Collie–Bunbury area that could include major metal fabrication for both import replacement in the resource sector and specialist fabrication for export. What an exciting government to be a member of; absolutely stunning.

Future opportunities for the Bunbury port are under the microscope through the Westport Taskforce, again repositioning my electorate at the centre of its maritime heritage and creating new opportunities for the port. All of this means jobs, apprenticeships and traineeships, and it means opportunity.

My electorate is relatively small in geographic terms, covering some 60 square kilometres. It has one of the larger regional populations with a strong multicultural flavour. It sits at the head of a south west economy that has a gross regional product estimated at over \$15 billion, based on agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, resource processing, human services and the creative industries. It is a shining light for our region. It is host to the region’s port, which has grown every year in terms of total freight handled, and is central to a large industrial land resource capable of supporting the opportunities I have described.

We started out with a plan for Bunbury that set out how we would support the emergence of a modern twenty-first century city with a strong sense of the future and the contribution it could make to Western Australia. There is a healthy conversation in Bunbury about how we achieve this—how we create a place where people can enjoy a career, build a home, educate the kids, have a healthy lifestyle and have all of this in a place they love. I am sure those sorts of principles are shared by many members in this place for their own electorates. While we are doing all of that in Bunbury, we are working through not only what is important for the city of today, but also what will be important for the city in 10, 20 or 30 years’ time. It is all the more remarkable that we are doing this despite the legacy of the previous government, and are achieving this with the state finances under control and our commitment to the reduction of state debt firmly in place.

I noted the member for Churchlands' comments on 31 October that we should ignore the past and that the only view of transparency and accountability is in the present. With a legacy of \$40 thousand million dollars in debt, I can understand why the opposition would want to forget the past: "Don't look there; let's just look at the current status and move forward from today." We as a government cannot afford to neglect the past, because that is the legacy we have to deal with and it guides our principles of sound budget strategy and sound budget management. If we do not learn from the past, we cannot build a future, so I hope that members opposite at some point down the track, when they might be in charge of the budget papers again, bear that in mind when managing expense growth and expenditure. We are certainly building a legacy for the future. While this government is forging ahead with fundamental reform and generation of opportunity, we will repair the legacy left by the previous government.

I am excited by this government's work in my electorate, including the work about to commence on improving sporting facilities at Hay Park and improving facilities at the Dalyellup Surf Life Saving Club. These are relatively small projects, but are fundamentally important to the many volunteers who work with those facilities week in, week out. The government is also identifying and supporting the needs of young families in Dalyellup, a community of 7 500 people, which is larger than many country towns. There is also work proceeding on stage 2 of the Bunbury waterfront; new investment in the Bunbury and Newton Moore Senior High Schools; and the redevelopment of the Bunbury Dolphin Discovery Centre, which is a stunning building that is going to be a new landmark for the City of Bunbury and a new centre for domestic and international tourism. There is also support for the retail sector in Bunbury's CBD. Last week I had the real joy of launching a new website based on collaborative marketing principles for the retailers in the CBD who have come together as one to promote the benefits and interests of shopping in the city centre.

There is work underway to replace the *Australind* train; new facilities to support people suffering from mental illness; and the government's work under the Methamphetamine Action Plan. It was great to see the report of the Methamphetamine Action Plan Taskforce, which was released this week. There is also the support we are putting into the suburban areas. Fundamentally, the work on the outer ring road has now commenced through the planning stage, providing certainty of long-term access to the port as it becomes more and more of a freight logistics centre, and providing a direction for southbound traffic so that we can focus on the needs of Bunbury, importantly, as a destination. Of course, there is the famous Koombana Footbridge, adjacent to Koombana Bay, which I think is a special attraction for Bunbury.

I know that this activity is not just restricted to my electorate; across WA the Minister for Regional Development has been very active, together with local members, in looking at new opportunities for agriculture, tourism and manufacturing. This government is bringing a fresh approach to the regional development agenda, with a new focus on regional strategy and sustainability. It is about commitment to regional infrastructure—we have one of the largest regional roadbuilding programs in history—and regional opportunity, building on the strengths of each region.

I contrast this with the tension that existed between members of the National Party and the Liberal Party in the previous government. Each year the Nationals were acutely aware of spending the royalties for regions cap, or risking loss of royalties for regions funds. The Liberals, equally, knew that not meeting the spending cap meant less commitment to the royalties for regions fund in any given year and more opportunity to deal with wider issues of state. As a consequence, and as the Langoulant report showed, good business planning and management was the casualty. We are not going to build the future of our regions on a buy-now, pay-later basis. We will build a future based on wise investment. That is why I am proud to be part of the McGowan Labor government.

MS J.M. FREEMAN (Mirrabooka) [8.56 pm]: I, too, rise to make a contribution to the Premier's Statement; it seems a while since we have had the opportunity to do so. When I thought back to that time, I remembered that we commemorated and celebrated on 13 February 2018 the 10-year anniversary of the National Apology to the Stolen Generations. It has been a big year and a momentous year in many other ways, in building on some of the important things that happened 10 years ago. For me, the apology laid the foundations for building a shared future and to work towards mutual understanding of and respect for the original owners of this land.

I still have vivid recollections of the day I sat with my son, Thomas, and my partner, John, on the lawn where Elizabeth Quay is now to listen to the apology. I was really proud recently of my son Thomas. He had to do a final music recital for his music degree and onstage, before his performance, he made time to do an acknowledgement. I think some of those foundations were put down deeply 10 years ago.

Since then we have had the historic Noongar native title settlement, incorporating six claims covering an area from Jurien Bay to Ravensthorpe and six Indigenous land use agreements. That is pretty amazing; it overcame the challenges of formalising land use agreements between the Noongar people and the Western Australian government—the largest native title settlement in Australian history, affecting more than 30 000 people.

Last week in the Mirrabooka electorate, the City of Stirling launched its second reconciliation plan at the Wadjak Northside community centre. That is a great centre for working on and developing Aboriginal inclusion in the community I represent. People such as Len Yarran, other champions and the elders of Wadjak Northside

Aboriginal community centre are to be applauded for the work that they do. Many of them were there today when I had the privilege of going to go the Balga Girls Academy graduation, which works with young Indigenous students at Balga Senior High School. Today they were recognised for their capacity and commitment.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr R.S. Love): Member for Girrawheen, when you enter the chamber you are required to seek the acknowledgment of the Chair.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Today those students were recognised for their capacity and resilience in their education. One young woman was at lunch with me today, along with seven other graduates from Balga. Every year I am privileged to work with the schools in my area, and after graduation I invite some year 12 graduates to have lunch here to celebrate their achievements, and the milestone of graduating from high school. The group today was a microcosm of the community I am lucky to represent. There were three young Karen men, all of whom came to Western Australia when they were nine years of age. They were not born in the Karen State of Burma, but on the Thai–Burma border, and lived there before coming to live in Australia. They have excelled in high school and are looking forward to continuing their studies. One is going to do a trade, another will continue studying, and the third is going to further his studies into his faith. At lunch there was also a young Somali woman who is about to embark on her studies in nursing, a young Cypriot who is about to go to university, and another young man. I am having a momentary lapse of memory and I cannot remember where he came from. But all those young people were stepping out, having experienced the great opportunities that our education system offers them in Western Australia. However, they all pointed out that now that the graduation ceremony is taking place in the Balga Senior High School—previously they had been held elsewhere—the gym needs a bit of renewal. I clearly need to have a chat with the Minister for Education about that.

What those young people show me is the importance of the transition from school into employment or further education. Employment is still a major issue in the seat of Mirrabooka. Household incomes are \$350 less than the state average, and there is an unemployment rate of 21 per cent in the suburbs of Mirrabooka and Balga. Other suburbs in the electorate offset that so that the electorate of Mirrabooka's unemployment rate sits at around 10 per cent, but it is 21 per cent in those two suburbs. Employment and employment opportunities are at the forefront of the community's concerns. I note that Anglicare Australia's "Jobs Availability Snapshot 2018" reported that five people compete for every entry-level job in Australia and that entry-level jobs are more and more limited as time goes by. The capacity for young people to enter the job market in entry-level jobs, which we were privileged to experience, is diminishing. We need to work very hard to ensure that those jobs are being created in our community. I congratulate the Labor government for increasing the number of jobs and the prosperity that we are now experiencing in our community since it was elected. All those jobs are vital in offering opportunities for the increasingly diverse communities that call Mirrabooka home.

Mirrabooka has changed over the last six years. The number of community members from India has increased by 3.5 per cent and the number of people from Vietnam has risen. I have talked about the Karen community, but also the number of Burmese Chin community members has increased by three per cent. All the people in those communities have a zeal, passion and dedication for developing their careers in Australia, for themselves and their children. I often remind people about that when they think about Mirrabooka, Balga, Koondoola and Girrawheen to a certain extent—not so much Alexander Heights and St Andrews Estate, which are also in the Mirrabooka electorate. Westminster is in the Mirrabooka electorate and Girrawheen is in the member for Girrawheen's electorate. In some of those suburbs, particularly in Mirrabooka, 52 per cent of the population were born overseas and 64 per cent have a parent who speaks a language other than English at home. I am talking about communities that have come to call Australia home and who are keen to progress their livelihoods in Australia, and employment is absolutely critical to that.

The thing about Perth is that it works on networks, and that is why I am so proud of the Kaleidoscope Initiative, an employment project that was formally launched in December 2017. It is a great initiative, based on the highly successful Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council model but is named the Kaleidoscope Initiative. It works with the City of Stirling, and now the City of Canning and other organisations. Last night I attended the first graduation of the mentorship program to go through the Kaleidoscope program. Those people had had an opportunity to gain great guidance, skills and knowledge through the partnerships that Kaleidoscope has established. One presentation was made by a young woman from Singapore. She had worked in the finance industry in Singapore, but after coming to Australia a year ago had become really despondent because she could not find employment in her area of expertise. She really felt hopeless. She came across Kaleidoscope after seeing its advertisements in the area and decided to sign up to the program. She was matched with an employee from the Commonwealth Bank, an inaugural partner in the Kaleidoscope program. It was just the boost that she needed. It gave her the confidence to persevere when her applications for jobs were not successful. She found, after speaking to her mentor from the Commonwealth Bank, that her skill base and capacity were relevant to the Australian workplace. The Commonwealth Bank mentor is also from a culturally diverse background. I think she is of Vietnamese heritage. She had grown up in Melbourne and had spent a vast amount of her time in Australian

schooling. She said that what was great about the program was that she was able to identify with some of the hurdles and was able to assist the young jobseeker from Singapore. These vital connections are at the heart of this program. Quite a number of people graduated last night. It is anticipated that 75 per cent of participants will achieve employment in their field of expertise within 12 months. That is based on outcomes from the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council, which developed the model.

[Quorum formed.]

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I have said in this place previously that what is absolutely pivotal to this program and needs to be applauded is that the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council provided its intellectual property for free to enable Kaleidoscope to run this program. It came here and trained people so that the program would be delivered properly. The program has been operating very successfully. One of the innovative things about this program is the absolute shift to acknowledging that employment is not the responsibility of just the federal government. Federal, state and local governments all need to participate, because employment is a critical need in our community.

An important focus of this initiative is that it harnesses the economic benefits of our diverse community. Although the program recently received some federal government funding, the state funding will end in December 2018. The state government is continuing to seek ways in which it can support this initiative. The City of Stirling has recently formed a partnership with the City of Canning to implement the mentoring aspect of this initiative. It has also formed a partnership with Dianella Secondary College and Balga Senior High School to help the students with networking and to transition to employment. Primarily, it is delivering to the parents of the students to enable them to understand the opportunities that are available.

The Kaleidoscope program has already supported 267 newcomers at 13 Job Ready workshops; helped 26 immigrant-led associations with a reach of over 50 000 individuals; and helped over 200 professionals, employers and business leaders to learn about the benefits of a diverse workforce and strategies for inclusion through their attendance at seven employer networking events and training programs. Eight partnerships have been developed with employers, and an additional 10 partnerships are in development. A partnership with MercyCare and Roots TV has enabled the projection of four short films about migrant employment success stories, which was launched in September.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: The Klaidescope initiative has a dedicated website, with monthly e-newsletters to tell people about all the great things that are being done. It seeks to change the current tuckbox approach to jobseekers and get on the ground and work with people at the grassroots. It is a great program. However, it does not address the need for meaningful employment services in the communities I represent, which need assistance in that area. I question the capacity of jobactive to deliver to people who are desperate for work. Now that we know that we are going to have a May election, we need to put firmly on the agenda for our constituencies —

Several members interjected.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: We do not know whether it will definitely be in May, but that appears to be the case. As the Prime Minister said, "You can do the maths."

Many of the people in the community I represent question the capacity of jobactive to deliver for people who are unemployed. Currently, jobactive is very transactional and all about mutual obligation. It is purely a process of demonstrating metrics for the department. Case managers have little capacity to work with people meaningfully, and case workers may have up to 300 people to manage. This outsourcing of human services by the federal government has seen \$7.3 billion spent over the last five years, with less than 40 per cent satisfaction from job seekers about the help they have received. The system churns workers through, breaches them constantly, and puts them into insecure employment. It places people in a position of having to make compromises in order to meet the requirements so that they will not be breached. Even if people do not have a good grasp of written English, they still have to fill in the job diary. That may cause people to act inappropriately, often by asking other family members to fill out their job diary so that they are not breached, because the ramification of being breached is that they lose their income.

A gentleman come into our office the week before last. He was so outraged that when he left our office, he forcefully broke our front door, which was not particularly fantastic. That was as a result of his experience with Centrelink. I do not know whether this happens to other members in this place, but constituents regularly come to our office with Centrelink problems. However, we have no capacity as state members of Parliament to contact anyone in the department to try to resolve their problems. This is a recent situation. Up until three years ago—I think that is right, member for Girrawheen—we had a liaison person in Centrelink to whom we could go, and we were often able to fix problems and make sure that people got payments or had avenues for redress so that they could get payments. Under this government, which breaches people quickly and without any understanding of their need

to earn an income, we have no capacity to respond to those community members. We have to say to a community member, “Yes, I am a member of Parliament, but I am not a member of Parliament who can deal with that, so you will need to see your federal member of Parliament.”

Several members interjected.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Yes. If the person lives in Koondoola or Alexander Heights, they can see Anne Aly, and that is fantastic. If they live in Mirrabooka, Balga or Westminster, they have to see Michael Keenan.

Several members interjected.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Can I just say, for the benefit of his office, that I contact Michael Keenan often, and his staff are excellent and try to assist, but they are hamstrung. That is because the system that has been created by the federal government does not want to help people. It wants to keep people out of the system. Therefore, Michael Keenan has become the gatekeeper for the system that Christian Porter and others set up.

The Department of Jobs and Small Business has released a discussion paper on the next generation of employment services. It is interesting to note that the discussion paper outlines that one in three people getting employment know the person who hires them. Again, I am trying to say how important that is. That is why the Kaleidoscope initiative is vital in that networking capacity. There were many submissions and I have gone through some of them. It is worthwhile for members to look at the submissions that have been made on the future of employment services to understand what is happening in their community. At page 15 of the submission by the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia, it encapsulates what I have experienced with job actives—that is, a lack of long-term commitment. This is a quote from a young person in WA —

“I felt that I had more support in my local library accessing the resume workshops and was more of a success in less than a weeks time period, rather than a few months with the centrelink referred employment services and successfully found two jobs after leaving the employment service.”

It seems to me that we are at a critical point with the services that are being delivered to the people most in need. We can create the jobs in Western Australia, but unless the Centrelink services and the jobactive network services are working towards placing people, we will continue to have calls from employers saying that they cannot find people. I do not believe that. There is a 21 per cent unemployment rate in Mirrabooka and Balga. There are people to be found.

Congratulations to the Labor Party in Victoria. What a great win. Jobs Victoria provides a tailored service and supports and connects jobseekers and employers. It does that with services such as a network of partnerships with employers. That is the sort of thing that Kaleidoscope is seeking to do. What we are seeing at the moment is the workplace and employment environment going from one of secure full-time employment with guaranteed holiday pay, sick pay and promotion to enable people to have financial security and home ownership to one without security. We need to ensure that people are given the best opportunities with the employment services that are delivered.

I am obviously pleased to see the MYVISTA nursing home in Mirrabooka progressing and getting built and the employment opportunities that will go with that. I will continue to push for development on land in Mirrabooka that will be beneficial for jobs in the Mirrabooka electorate. Hopefully, there will be a private hospital. There is good government land there that needs industry of some sort, such as the health industry or others, to ensure that there are local jobs in the area.

While I am talking about Centrelink, I want to talk about the paltry, pathetic amount of the Newstart allowance. As we lead into the federal election, as a state government, we have a responsibility to stand up and say to the federal government and the federal opposition that the Newstart allowance is no longer appropriate for people to live on. The federal opposition has committed to reform, but people are suffering. We know that people do not live in isolation; they live with others in the community. Australia has always valued the principle that a community thrives when it gets supported to succeed. It is really important to put in place measures to stop people falling through the gap between their safety net income and what they need to pay for their financial commitments

Bernie Fraser said in a recent speech that Australian society has become far less fair, less compassionate and more divided despite 27 years of solid economic growth. The Committee for Economic Development of Australia report “How Unequal? Insights on inequality” outlined the issue of inequality in our welfare payments and said that it is a foundational, social issue. Seven hundred thousand Australians find themselves in persistent and recurrent poverty. I attended the CEDA lunch held on 27 April, which was going to be in a big hall but it had to be moved to a smaller venue. The CEO said to me that it was really disappointing that people did not see this issue as important enough as others to attend the lunch. I came away thinking about that and thought that that was because when we think about inequality and the Newstart allowance, we think it is someone else’s problem, someone else’s responsibility and someone else’s fault and, as we have no fault or blame, it does not concern us. That is where we are at, but we can no longer afford to do that. As Bernie Fraser said, we need to share our economic dividends.

The blame game cannot be played with these people. We have to think about how we changed how we looked at domestic violence. We stopped blaming victims and said that we have to do things in our society to make people feel safe and to require things in terms of that. In this case, we cannot blame the victims who find themselves needing Newstart or other assistance to make sure that they live a quality life. We need to address our safety net welfare system for ordinary battlers and the middle class who are doing it tough. We have to create a society that is equal. We cannot apportion blame to people and say that they wasted or squandered it. We have to make sure that our society gets back to where it was and focuses on equality yet again.

MS M.M. QUIRK (Girrawheen) [9.26 pm]: Some weeks ago our near neighbours in Sulawesi experienced apocalyptic disaster conditions of an earthquake followed by a tsunami, and more recently a volcanic eruption. At last count, over 1 900 people were killed and many thousands more were left homeless. More than 70 000 homes were destroyed or damaged by the magnitude 7.5 quake that launched waves as high as six metres that slammed into the island at 800 kilometres an hour. More than 2 500 people were injured and almost 75 000 were displaced. For various reasons, including remoteness and inaccessibility, aid efforts only trickled in and we watched, helpless, the spectacle of thousands of desperate people waiting for aid to arrive all too slowly. On behalf of us all, we send our thoughts and prayers to the people of Indonesia and hope that the restoration efforts will build a once-more vibrant and resilient Sulawesi.

I have, however, long considered that in Western Australia, situated on the Indian Ocean rim, we should have stationed and on stand-by an international urban search and rescue contingent known as DART, or disaster assistance response team. These Australian government disaster assistance response teams are deployed to crises overseas to help save lives and return communities to normal. They are funded by the commonwealth. Their urban search and rescue expertise is invaluable following disasters such as earthquakes and cyclones and other disasters. Their capabilities include locating and removing people from rubble, water rescue during flooding, urgent repairs to critical structures, managing hazardous materials or spills, and water purification and desalination. DART teams have been present after a number of disasters over the years, including tropical cyclone Gita in Tonga in 2018, tropical cyclone Pam in Vanuatu in 2015, the Solomon Islands flooding in 2014, the Japan earthquake and tsunami in 2011, the Christchurch earthquake in New Zealand in 2011, the Samoa tsunami in 2009 and so on.

The DART teams are drawn from Queensland Fire and Emergency Services and Fire and Rescue New South Wales. These preformed teams are stationed at pre-stocked aircraft bases in Queensland and New South Wales, ready to go at short notice. I should add that Western Australian Department of Fire and Emergency Services personnel have attended some of these operations.

I am advocating for a full contingent in WA for three reasons. Firstly, Western Australia is on the Indian Ocean rim and we need to forge greater ties with our neighbours, not to mention our closer proximity to those countries—it just makes sense. Secondly, it means that more of our local DFES personnel will receive regular training at the highest level of the full range of skills and challenges that a disaster incident response team operative must possess. That is not to say that local urban search and rescue personnel are not highly trained, but attendance at these large-scale emergencies will hone and maintain their skills and broaden their professional experience. Thirdly, which is a corollary of the second, WA itself is isolated from the rest of Australia, and in the event that a disaster occurred in remote Western Australia, for help to arrive from the other states itself incurs some delay, so this would mean greater self-sufficiency. In this context, I note that the search for MH370 was based at Pearce air base, and we should have that capability on a permanent basis. It would increase our ties with many of our closest neighbours and trading partners, it would generate significant goodwill and it could be considered to be part of the humanitarian aid that we usually give anyway during such disasters. It would also mean that attendance at disasters would be several hours ahead of teams departing from the eastern seaboard.

The second matter I want to touch upon is the issue of GST—finally, capitulation by the commonwealth government! I congratulate the Premier for his tireless advocacy. This contrasts with the limpid Western Australian MPs and senators from the Liberal and National Parties who have been conspicuously mute on the issue or, even worse, implied full support in Western Australia but acting inconsistently with that stance when they got to Canberra and their party rooms. Their inertia deserves special mention.

This reticence to stand up for Western Australia should be uppermost in every voter's mind when they lodge their ballot papers in the forthcoming federal election. Without meaning to labour the point, members might like to be mindful that a number of federal Liberal members who have represented us in Canberra for a considerable number of years not only failed for over a decade to raise the raw GST deal we received, until their electoral futures looked grim, but also, worse still, positively defended the status quo. These include Michael Keenan, a member of Parliament for 14 years and minister for five; Julie Bishop, an MP for 20 years and a minister for 10; Ian Goodenough, a member for five years; Senator Mathias Cormann, a member for 11 years and minister for five; Steve Irons, a member for 11 years; Ken Wyatt, a member for eight years and a minister for three years; Michaelia Cash, a senator for 11 years and a minister for five years; and Christian Porter, a member for five years

and a minister for three. Before that, of course, he was a state Treasurer and acutely aware of these issues. As the Treasurer said the other day in this place, it was only really after the Productivity Commission's recent report that the issue got some impetus. What is most important to remember is that this struggle to get our fair share has persisted for well over a decade, which makes their silence even more reprehensible.

In late 2001, the then Gallop government, along with the governments of New South Wales and Victoria, commissioned leading economist Professor Ross Garnaut and Dr Vince Fitzgerald to review the commonwealth–state funding arrangements. At this stage, it was considered bad enough that Western Australia was receiving, from recollection, around the mid-60c mark in the dollar. I refer to a government parliamentary question by the late Paul Andrews to then Treasurer Eric Ripper on 4 December 2001, in which he asked —

Will the Treasurer inform members what action the Government is taking to reform the Commonwealth–State financial relations?

To which Mr Ripper replied —

... I met with the Treasurers of New South Wales and Victoria to launch a comprehensive independent review of the Commonwealth–State financial relations. That inquiry is needed urgently because New South Wales, Western Australia and Victoria are subsidising the other States to the tune of \$2 billion a year and the subsidy is set to grow to about \$3 billion a year by 2005–06. That figure is reached by comparing the amount of goods and services tax revenue that the three States receive compared with the share they would receive on a per capita basis. The situation is even more serious for Western Australia. When the amount of revenue raised by the Commonwealth from this State is compared with the amount of commonwealth expenditure in this State—that is, direct commonwealth expenditure and payments to the States—Western Australia loses \$2.7 billion each year. That is the outflow of funds from this State used to subsidise the rest of the Federation and is the largest fiscal subsidy to the rest of the Federation of any State in the country.

The Commonwealth Grants Commission administers the distribution of the commonwealth grants using a formula that is rather arcane and mysterious ... The Commonwealth Grants Commission is the only body that reviews the formula. We must have a better system. There is no argument against Western Australia supporting weaker States like Tasmania or South Australia, but I draw the line when it is asked to subsidise Queensland, which has a very strong fiscal position and has the capacity to cut taxes that draw investment away from other States.

He continued —

We need a better system in this country. Professor Ross Garnaut and Dr Vince Fitzgerald will conduct the independent review. They are eminent people who will present a strong argument for change—I am confident that their conclusions will recommend change. There is no doubt that Western Australian taxpayers suffer a significant cost in providing the roads, ports and water supplies for resources projects. We do not get the full benefit of the royalties from those resources projects. Some 80 per cent to 90 per cent of those royalties are redistributed to the other States. That affects our economic development and it affects the State budget.

I remind members that those comments were made in 2001. The Garnaut–Fitzgerald review examined not only general purpose payments, which include GST distribution, but also specific purpose grants, which receive less attention but also can be the cause of contention and financial manipulation of the states. When the review was finalised, it proposed a concept of equity among individuals or households—that we should replace the horizontal fiscal equalisation concept with equity of capacity to provide services. Also, they found that many special-purpose payments outside health, education and Indigenous community development should be discontinued and funds rolled into two national programs administered by the states. Special-purpose payments covering cross-border programs, such as national roads, would be unaffected. The review cited a study that indicated that the Commonwealth Grants Commission's methods did not improve vertical equity but made it worse. Not surprisingly, these proposals were never implemented, because the federal government's inclination was to do nothing to change the arrangements at the time unless all states agreed, knowing full well that this was highly unlikely. I spoke to former Treasurer Ripper the other night and he told me that after this report there were some concessions from the commonwealth in terms of infrastructure payments. I suppose, in summary, the report confirmed that Western Australia, Victoria and New South Wales were all donor states.

As we all know, the situation has significantly deteriorated since then, but unlike the Liberals at both the federal and state level, Western Australian Labor has maintained its rage. I think that is very important to remember. I have sat in this chamber for some time. Every time we raised the issue of GST under the Gallop and Carpenter governments there was much rolling of the eyes by the Liberal opposition and much scorn—there was never any real attempt to have bipartisan advocacy to the commonwealth government about the GST situation.

As I said, at least Labor maintained its rage. There was an article on WAtoday on 31 October 2010 headed “WA Labor rips into Gillard on GST share”. The article says —

... Eric Ripper has sided with Liberal Premier Colin Barnett to call on the federal government to urgently address the state’s share of the GST.

Mr Ripper was responding to comments by Mr Barnett that the state was “under siege” from the Gillard Labor government partly because of its formula for distributing GST revenue among the states.

At that stage —

Currently WA is returned 68 cents in the dollar from the Commonwealth ...

I make the point that for the currency of the Howard government Mr Barnett remained silent. It was only when Julia Gillard got into government that suddenly there was strident criticism by the Liberals. Unlike Mr Barnett, Mr Ripper was prepared to criticise the federal government, even though he was of the same political persuasion.

Having more equitable GST arrangements in Western Australia is well overdue and it is a huge achievement that we have reached the point at which there is now a concession by the commonwealth. As we all know, in 2018 Western Australia is receiving about 38 cents in the dollar. As I said, it is very important to realise that that is not the whole picture of federal–state financial relations, so all is not forgiven. As the Garnaut report noted special-purpose payments by the commonwealth to the states are also highly problematical. They are problematical because the commonwealth retains the financial whip hand. The commonwealth can cut or vary those funding arrangements, leaving the states high and dry. The obvious example is housing funding for remote communities. The commonwealth has walked away from that. Also, service delivery does not necessarily occur at an appropriate level, which leads to duplication of administration and the imposition of conditions to enshrine unpalatable policy and intervention into areas principally within the state constitutional responsibility. I say to members that yes, getting more equity in the GST is a great achievement, but watch those special-purpose payments.

These ongoing issues surrounding the demarcation between the fiscal dominance of the federal government and the responsibility of the states for service delivery is no more evident than in the area of aged care.

Member for Warnbro, you did not bow! You did, did you? All right. I forgot what seat I was in, Mr Acting Speaker!

Although I am a great believer in federalism, I have frequently observed that the aged-care sector is one sphere in which the allocation of responsibility of the federal government is dysfunctional. It is dysfunctional because there is no incentive for the commonwealth to do a good job. If it does not, the state-run hospital system bears the cost and care burden.

This seems to be a natural segue to the recently announced Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. The terms of reference include the quality of aged-care services, the extent to which those services meet the needs of people accessing them and the extent of substandard care being provided. It will look at how best to deliver aged-care services, firstly to people with disabilities residing in aged-care facilities, and that includes younger people, and also the increasing number of Australians living with dementia. There is also going to be focus on people’s desire to remain living at home and how that can be accommodated, and also services in remote and rural regional Australia. It will also look at how the system of aged-care services can engage families and carers in aged care of loved ones.

[Member’s time extended.]

Ms M.M. QUIRK: It will also look at the increased use of technology and investment in the aged-care workforce and capital infrastructure. The royal commission has quite a wideranging brief. Firstly, I note that WA’s own Justice Joe McGrath has been appointed as one of the commissioners. Having worked with Justice McGrath in the past, I know he will bring his usual rigour, intellect and compassion to the inquiry. I congratulate him for agreeing to take on the task. Secondly, I am not altogether convinced that we need a royal commission to identify the already well-known issues within the sector, and these are how we make sure that aged-care staff are valued, paid properly and properly trained; that promises being made to vulnerable people in care are being delivered on; and that the complexity and duplication of bureaucratic morass to access either in home-care or aged-care places is eliminated. We also have to do more to mitigate the impact of dementia, but more of that shortly.

Having scrutinised the terms of reference, it is open to conclude that some of the most pressing issues in the aged-care sector in Western Australia may not be the focus of the commission’s inquiry. In Western Australia we have an acute shortage of aged-care beds. Although the McGowan government has freed up land through changes to zoning, there is an inevitable lag in building new aged-care facilities. The last time I inquired, the demand for beds far exceeded supply to the shortfall of over 3 000 beds.

For those wanting to stay at home as long as possible, changes to the funding model for so-called aged-care assessment teams has led to the undesirable outcome that many local governments had deserted the field because the seniors services they used to provide are no longer funded. Under the new model of assessing an individual’s

needs, group activities such as those that local governments tended to conduct are now limited. Even big councils like Stirling and Wanneroo that abut my electorate are ceasing a lot of the very good services they used to run. Moreover, ACAT care is a two-phased process. Firstly, there is the assessment, and once needs are ascertained, there is again a wait for the package to be devised and a provider appointed. There is considerable delay in Western Australia at the moment. Accordingly, the waiting time for the initial interview and then the actual delivery of the care package is unsatisfactorily long. It is generally held that there are insufficient packages in WA being made by the commonwealth. A large amount of the value of packages seems to be eaten up with administrative cost and service provider advertising. Many complain to me there is no continuity of staff in service provision, with a different person attending on each occasion in many cases. Often the elderly have only agreed to have home help under sufferance and are wary of strangers in their homes.

One of the issues that will arise in the royal commission is the impact of the multimillion-dollar commonwealth government budget cuts for dementia patients with complex needs and the longstanding rebate of payroll tax aimed at encouraging the maintenance of staffing levels in nursing homes. Although Prime Minister Morrison made much capital of a recent injection of funding into the aged-care sector, it failed to restore the targeted programs previously axed.

On the issue of dementia, in September we marked Dementia Awareness Month. It was a time for the community to gain a greater appreciation of the issues surrounding that and other forms of dementia. The understanding of most is informed by the experience of a family member with a condition. For others, it may be limited to the publicity surrounding a missing person—an extensive search called and appeals by family members widely circulated in the media. Sadly, these often end tragically. I am always heartened by the overwhelming community response and the sensitive handling of the search by police, State Emergency Service and the media.

Few realise that dementia is now the second leading cause of death of Australians, contributing to 5.4 per cent of all deaths in males and 10.6 per cent of all deaths in females each year. There are an estimated 425 000 Australians living with dementia. Without a medical breakthrough the number of people with dementia is expected to increase to over 1 million by 2050. Although these predictions are alarming, I stress that they are only predictions and not inevitable. There is potential with the appropriate intervention to substantially modify the numbers of people with dementia by preventive interventions—that is, by lowering incidents; improvements in treatment care, which means by prolonging survival; and disease-modifying treatment, which means preventing or slowing progression. Like cancer and heart disease, adopting a healthy lifestyle early can minimise the risk in later life.

Affecting memory and other cognitive abilities and behaviour, the disease interferes significantly with a person's ability to maintain activities of daily living. Although age is the strongest known risk factor for dementia, it is not a normal part of ageing. There is no cure or treatment to alter its progressive course; the amount invested in drug trials is a mere fraction of what is spent on research into diseases such as cancer. Dementia is overwhelming for not only the people who have it but also their caregivers and family. That impact can be mitigated with early diagnosis. A House of Representatives committee of inquiry heard evidence in 2012 that as many as two-thirds of people with dementia live and die without the condition being diagnosed. Amongst the minority who do receive diagnosis, the average time between first symptoms and diagnosis is over three years. The inquiry found that as a consequence of non and late diagnosis, the majority of people with dementia and their families slip through the gaps and miss out on crucial opportunities for early intervention in the form of treatment, support, advance care planning and understanding their condition.

Also not widely understood is the nature of cognitive impairment with this disease. Myth would have it that the reduction in mental capacity follows a linear path over time. It is much more complex than that. For example, doctors and carers observe sundown syndrome with Alzheimer's patients in which increased confusion and restlessness manifests itself late in the day. Similarly, the courts adjudicating a contested will or question of legal capacity will often be told that the person the subject of the case experienced a lucid moment when crucial documents were executed. Although research confirms cognitive fluctuations, it is only in alertness and attention rather than higher level executive functions that are essential components of testamentary capacity.

Our laws are outdated; for example, in determining whether someone has the mental capacity to face the courts on criminal charges, WA's archaic laws refer to senility as a reason for mental impairment. As that relates to old age, those with younger onset dementia, equally unable to comprehend court proceedings or are unaware their actions, are not covered. Thankfully, Attorney General John Quigley has foreshadowed amendments to the Criminal Law (Mentally Impaired Accused) Act, which will remove that anomaly. Also being addressed by the government is elder abuse, the prevalence of which is more common than first thought. In the case of financial elder abuse, the perpetrator seemingly acts in the older person's best interest with the authority of an enduring power of attorney or guardianship. These enable the older person's assets to be stolen with impunity or living arrangements to be changed. Those authorisations have often been obtained when the older person was suffering dementia and did not appreciate the implications and consequences of their signing of those documents. By the time other family members or third parties are made aware of the misappropriation, the money is long gone. The victims themselves

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 27 November 2018]

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Mr Donald Punch; Ms Janine Freeman; Ms Margaret Quirk

are ashamed and reluctant to report a close relative and police cannot prosecute as the victim's memory is failing and they are not an ideal witness. The question of capacity of those with dementia is of concern in deliberations and debate around the euthanasia laws. The recently tabled report by the Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices canvasses the appropriate person to assess decision-making capacity before an individual can proceed. Although further consideration on this and other matters has been referred to an expert panel, the majority report favours assessment by two GPs rather than specialists. Given the known difficulties with accurate and timely diagnosis of dementia and the problems associated with assessing decision-making capacity, I counsel caution.

The final word on dementia should go to carers. In Carers Week, I spoke to family carers at Brightwater in Madeley in my capacity as a volunteer advocate for Alzheimer's Western Australia. Carers include elderly spouses or children having to leave work to act as full-time carers. It is extremely challenging, often with little respite and socially isolating. If you know someone in that position be mindful that the smallest gesture, kindness or social interaction makes a big difference.

Debate adjourned on motion by **Mr D.A. Templeman (Leader of the House)**.