

MINISTERS — PERFORMANCE

Motion

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

That this house calls on the Premier to sack his incompetent ministers after a winter recess that has exposed a raft of delivery failures in key portfolios at a time of record windfalls.

We have started this conversation in the chamber over the last two days about a number of ministers who have been under pressure and the cracks in the McGowan Labor government's cabinet that have started to emerge over the winter recess. Members, we have a Premier with parliamentary strength, I think it is fair to say, with numbers that we have never seen before. The same Premier is also the Treasurer and has a massive budget surplus at his fingertips. Over the last five years, I can safely say that we have seen this government and its MPs become more arrogant, more dismissive and more caught up in spin than substance than I think I have ever seen. The last two days have been particularly disappointing because there has been an attitude of almost derisiveness in discussions on the serious matters that we as the opposition have raised—serious issues like crime in the north west of the state and other matters that impact the people and communities that we all seek to represent.

This government has been in power for five and a half years. The Minister for Health was moved on after completely failing to get a handle on bed block, ambulance ramping at record highs—that has continued under the next Minister for Health—and resourcing issues, whereby we saw cuts to operational funding in our health service that were not matched with the reforms that were needed to be undertaken as recommended by the sustainable health review. That has delivered some of the most challenging circumstances that have been then added to by COVID. The Minister for Water, who was probably the only minister that an industry found more challenging than the current Minister for Agriculture and Food—I am referring to the Minister for Water in his former capacity as the Minister for Fisheries—managed to alienate an entire sector over his handling of the rock lobster industry. Aside from those two and a couple of shuffles after the last election, there has really been little change in the portfolio line-up. A minister really has to do something pretty terrible to lose their portfolio, it would appear. The scale of what is pretty terrible is hard to determine. We will go through what has emerged in some of these portfolios during this period and ask: What does a minister actually need to do? What does a minister need to do to get the “Don’t come in on Monday” letter from the Premier?

Over the winter recess, we seemed to see a bit of a tipping point. No matter what the Premier believes, he cannot continue to provide that cover and defend ministers without some of that shine that has been with him for the last five years coming off. It will have an impact because, as the Premier, he will not be able to go out and prosecute the positive stories that we know the Premier likes to associate himself with, whether in his portfolios or everyone else's—a point of contention I am aware of amongst his own cabinet ministers—but also he will be defending and providing that cover for ministers who probably really need to move on. He will have backbenchers starting to say, “I reckon I could do a bit better.” If he continues to blindly back those loyal lieutenants who have been a part of that central McGowan power structure within the Labor Party, I think that it will start to grate on those who can see these fumbles and gaffes from senior members of the Labor government. It really must grate when those blunders and mistakes earn the defence of the Premier and it poses the question, as I said before: what does a minister actually have to do to be moved on from a portfolio?

Further to this, we have also become aware over the winter recess that there will be a number of ministers stepping down at the next election. That includes Minister Ellery and Minister MacTiernan; however, we understand that they will continue to hold plum jobs in the cabinet, although it was questionable when we asked the Premier yesterday whether Minister MacTiernan would have that job for the remainder of this period. There was definitely not an emphatic, “Yes, Minister MacTiernan will be a member of my cabinet until 2025.” That was left a little open. I wonder whether that minister has come to the end of the line with her cabinet portfolios.

I do not pretend for one moment to understand the machinations inside the Labor Party, the way unions work and how ministers are selected. I know it happens, and there is a dark art and science that I am sure most do not want to share with the general public. But I do know that the unions and certain factions get a responsibility to make sure that their representatives are in the cabinet. I suspect that is part of the answer as to why we do not see certain ministers being shifted off; I think another part is definitely loyalty from the Premier's perspective, so he cannot shift some of the people he wants to and he will not shift some of the people he needs to. The problem is that it is the people of Western Australia who will ultimately suffer, because we have ministers who are not doing their job effectively. We have a destructive government and a destructive Premier.

The Premier's unwillingness to see the failings of his ministers means that he will have to keep defending them instead of getting out on the front foot and talking about policy and government achievements and actually working on some of the challenges that we in this chamber are constantly talking about—there are many—and his

unwillingness to move these ministers on means that there is an inability to control the narrative, as there has been for the last three years, particularly with the cover of COVID. That is a fair observation. In COVID, as in any emergency situation, people naturally look to those in power, and the Premier was at the head of that. But now that we have shifted from the most immediate emergency of COVID, that cover is diminishing, and people are starting to look more closely at what exactly is being delivered by this government. Does it match the rhetoric? Does it match the promises that have been made? Where are the cracks that are starting to emerge?

For the record, I think it is important that we talk about what we think are the basics of a good and functioning government. What are the basics in the important business of governing? From my perspective, a strong and sustainable health system is one of the fundamentals for a state government to get right. Other basics include a housing sector that provides a safety net for those who are in most need or in crisis; affordable entry-level housing for those who are aspirational and want to grow their own personal wealth and security over their lifetime; and a private sector that offers a diversity of options that means we do not have some of the issues that we are facing at the moment. I think that the basics also include an education system that means we have a teacher in front of every classroom and resources to deal with the complex issues that we know our schools and our families face on a daily basis, and a safe and secure community that has not only a well-resourced police service, but also all those other functions that prevent people from ending up entering the corrective services system, into our detention centres and jails and prisons, diverts them away from those pathways and provides the support that is needed. From my perspective, I think the expectation of the public for a good and successful government is that they get the basics of health, education, housing and safety elements right.

Of course, it is more complex than this. People in other sectors will say, “What about this?”, and I am not dismissing that, but there are fundamentals that state governments have to get right. I will go through some issues that portfolio holders and cabinet ministers have had responsibility for, but on any assessment of what has happened over the last five years, by any measure, there are significant failures that need to be addressed. My colleagues will go into this in far more depth, but, from my perspective, this is about providing an overview of why we think there is a real challenge ahead for this government and why there is a need for the Premier to discontinue the defence of the indefensible and allow some of the others sitting on the back bench who are competent to come forward and refresh the cabinet.

Minister Sanderson took over the health portfolio and now has the dubious honour of overseeing the highest levels of ambulance ramping ever in the state’s history. That is correct, is it not, member for Vasse? I think it was around 7 000 hours last month—or just a touch under. That is nearly 10 times what it was when we were in government, and we had the shadow health minister at the time saying, “This is an unmitigated crisis; the health system is broken”, yet now we have 10 times the amount of ramping.

The ambulance ramping started under the previous Minister for Health, and that was very early in the piece. It was raised again and again by the then opposition, by the AMA, by health workers and by the nurses union, and this was well before COVID arrived in Western Australia. Those challenges in the health system were identifiable. Anyone who understands the health system knows that when you start to get ramping, there are issues that need to be dealt with down the line. The red flags, or the canary in the coalmine—whatever you want to call it—were ignored by the government very early in the piece, as was the sustainable health review. That is another one that has been shelved, with very little attention given to it. I go back to earlier comments I made both here and outside this chamber: if you are going to go through a review process, it comes with a price tag. To my understanding, this government cut the operational funds for our health system without doing the reforms that would improve efficiencies and safety in our hospitals and health services. That is not reform; it is simply coming in and cutting funding, and that is why, among other reasons, we have ended up with such an enormous challenge in the hospital system.

Under this government, we have seen rallies on a number of occasions. One sticks in my memory. The Perth Children’s Hospital nurses, the AMA and the nurses union—I am happy to be corrected, but I do not think that is something that had happened before—all came together to say, “We’ve had enough. We have absolutely reached our tipping point, and we need change.” There can be no doubt that there is a crisis in the health system, and the problems are compounded in the regional areas of Western Australia.

I asked the minister today, going specifically to an issue that I know is impacting a community in regional WA right now, to guarantee that the maternity services at Carnarvon hospital will be returned in full. Not only do we have these enormous issues, compounding problems and resourcing issues in the metro, but, from February this year, 71 mothers have been forced to travel from the Gascoyne, Carnarvon and surrounding areas to deliver their babies in either Geraldton or Perth—71 families! Most often that means mothers having to leave their family. They can travel with one family member, but if they already have kids they have to find somewhere for them to stay. They have to pay for accommodation and travel. Some of that is reimbursed, but not all of it. More of a problem, I think, is that they are forced, at a very challenging time, when they are about to give birth, to be away from their family and their support network. Then, immediately after having given birth and having spent the first couple of

days in hospital, they have to travel a significant distance to get back home. I cannot imagine what that is like; I am not even going to pretend to be able to, but I do not imagine it is something we would say is best practice when dealing with a newborn baby and a family who need to be together. I think that is unacceptable. That is just one isolated issue that I raise very briefly in my contribution, but I am sure that each member sitting on this side of the chamber could raise at least 10 examples from their own electorates. We need to have these issues treated with some urgency to do everything we can to make sure we have a functioning health service.

In relation to housing, we have a Minister for Housing who has no houses, having sold 1 300 houses upon coming into government. Yesterday, when asked directly whether the 1 300 houses had been replaced, the minister danced around the question. There was no clear answer on that. There was absolutely no: “Yes, we have returned those 1 300 houses to housing stock in Western Australia”. It was far from comforting to listen to the Minister for Housing’s answer yesterday. That is what this government does. When it does not want to answer the question or does not think the answer will be palatable to the community, we see the avoidance of responsibility.

I will give an example from regional Western Australia. There is a plethora of other issues, including those surrounding homelessness in our metropolitan areas but also in our regions; the lack of a social housing pipeline; and the failure to manage the challenges we are facing—particularly in regional WA. I want to point out a real issue on which the minister could drive some change tomorrow if there was actually a desire to do so. My colleagues, both Liberal and National, have travelled through the North West Central electorate, as we have candidates in the upcoming by-election, something the Labor Party has chosen not to do. In a recent visit to both Kalbarri and Exmouth, I would have to say the number one issues on the agenda for every key stakeholder and member of the community are workforce shortages and housing shortages. They are the two issues that are consistent among every group we talk to. In both Kalbarri and Exmouth, but for different reasons, there is a real challenge in finding accommodation for those who provide support services in the tourism industry and also small business.

Workers’ accommodation is the perfect solution for this. It allows the community to rebalance and private sector investment to be made, but the reality is that, without government intervention, there is not going to be a workers’ accommodation project. I know the member for Moore has more to say in relation to the Kalbarri experience. All I can say is that land has been identified repeatedly in both areas by both local governments, and there has been a tender process for at least one of them, but without the government stepping in to provide support for services and take a stake in housing projects, I cannot see—though I am happy to be proven wrong—the private sector stepping in to do this off its own bat. This needs government intervention, and it needs to happen now. It should have happened much sooner in Kalbarri, as should the emergency housing that that community, along with Northampton, was promised after cyclone Seroja. Workers accommodation is a real and lasting legacy that this government can make.

I often hear the things that this government believes we fell short on when we were in government. In the Pilbara, when we came to government, there was a shocking situation in which there had been no planning and no servicing of blocks. We had record high rents and record high housing prices. We had people in caravans, piled on top of each other, and sleeping in driveways simply so that they could continue to take advantage of the great opportunity of working in the mining sector. The government had utterly failed to manage the growth of those communities. When we came to government, we had to deal with the backlog that was left behind by the Carpenter and Gallop governments and invest in a whole raft of different remediations, which included workers’ accommodation that is still used today. This government could do that tomorrow. It could simply say that it will not go through the tender process but have a stake in building the accommodation facility itself instead of relying on the private sector to come to the market. The cost of developing the land up there, putting in the services and then finding the right product prices out most of the private sector in getting a return on its investment. That is why many local governments in regional Western Australia often end up being the developer of last resort in their communities. That can be changed by the government taking a different approach. I put that on the record in the context of the electorate of North West Central.

Also, from an electorate point of view, it is interesting that the Premier had a conversation last night, which he talked about today, at the event that was held in Parliament House with Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. CBH was up here celebrating its enormous success of last year’s massive grain crop of 24 million tonnes. There was a celebration on that front to say what a great achievement that was for the state of Western Australia and what an exciting time it was to be involved in the agriculture industry. The Premier spent much of his time addressing the audience talking about himself and his family. I think he missed the point that people in the industry and the sector were trying to make; that is, they were there to talk about the next 25 to 30 years for the industry and the fact that it requires government support to invest in infrastructure to enable us to take advantage of that and to be a real player in not only domestic food security, but also international food security. Although there was appreciation for the Premier’s attendance at that function last night, which was co-hosted by CBH and the Minister for Agriculture and Food, the Premier needs to scratch a little bit deeper when he has these types of conversations and listen to what industry is saying. The one thing that came out of the conversation after that event was that housing is going to be one of the biggest inhibitors for that industry to be able to deliver the infrastructure and the people that it wants living in the region to support the growth that it knows is coming in this amazing industry. That is the conversation

Ms Mia Davies; Dr David Honey; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr David Templeman; Mr Shane Love; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Bill Johnston

we should be having—how we plan for the future of the mining industry and the agriculture sector. Both those ministers do not have the capacity to have the conversation with industry; firstly, because Minister MacTiernan has got everyone in that sector offside to the point that they do not want to engage; and, secondly, because I am not sure that this minister, because he has failed to engage in the workers' accommodation discussion in other areas where there is acute need, has the capacity to look at this in a strategic way for the agricultural sector.

Before I sit down, I will also touch on the Attorney General. We have had a bit of a discussion recently about the Attorney General's performance over the last five years. As we all know, he was a lawyer before entering Parliament, as he is still, and is now the chief law officer of this state. He has earned himself many column inches and talkback minutes. Although no-one would deny that the Attorney General brings a reform approach to his portfolio and has been prolific with the legislation that has been brought before this house, I know that everybody agrees and accepts that the bar is necessarily higher for the person who holds the role of Attorney General. That person is the chief law officer of the state. The bar is set high for the integrity, accountability and performance of the person who is in that role. It is very important.

Quite frankly, on some occasions the Attorney General's judgement has been atrocious. We saw him jump in a private helicopter with Mr John Poynton, a former Crown director, during or just post an inquiry into Crown casino. Friend or not, a minister's judgement in an incident like that needs to be, "It would be nice to do it but I'm not going to because it's not going to look great." Perception, whether it is real or not, is everything in the role that ministers hold. The bar is higher. That incident would never pass the pub test. In this case, I do not think the Attorney General has ever conceded that it was the wrong thing to do. He kept his job. In the middle of the COVID pandemic, as we have heard previously, when the Premier, the Minister for Health, the Chief Health Officer, the Vaccine Commander and the WA Commissioner of Police told everyone that they needed to wear their masks and stay safe, we saw the Attorney General attend a big public function without a mask. He was fined. It was not a small incident; he was actually fined. Members of the public who were required to do the same thing and did not want to do that were also fined. Again, the bar is set very high for the Attorney General. He is one person in the government who needs to set an example, along with the Premier. He is a senior member of cabinet. He had a really poor sense of judgement on that occasion.

Honestly—I think this is a fair question—what do ministers have to do to get dismissed from this cabinet? When a Federal Court judge described the Attorney General's performance in evidence in a Federal Court as having flipped and flopped and then flipped again, it was far from a resounding endorsement of capacity. It is definitely a reflection on what was a fairly sorry state of affairs. The Attorney General was forced to return to the court to again provide evidence. He directly contradicted himself and was found to be not reliable by a Federal Court judge. *The West Australian's* Peter Law pondered exactly the question that I have just posed to this house, which is: what do you have to do to get the "Don't come Monday" from the Premier? On 4 August, he wrote —

Labor insiders say this strong backing is a legacy of a failed coup to replace McGowan with former Federal minister Stephen Smith as party leader in 2016.

That entire opinion piece was very interesting. I might just read a little more. He went on to say —

At the same time as the Premier was telling reporters to "move on" from MacTiernan's "clumsy" playing down of the foot and mouth disease threat, sources said the pair had a heated clash at Labor's annual caucus retreat in Karratha.

In that whole article there were references to Labor insiders and Labor sources. He then described what happened, as he was told by Labor sources. We all have them in our parties, but I have to say that over the last four years, the Labor Party has been very disciplined in its discussions outside of caucus and outside of its party room. That is one of the things that has kept the government together. When we start to see those lines written more and more in the media, good luck to the journalists and well done to them for having people who are willing to share that information. It is an interesting part of the role we play. We absolutely know that fault lines are running through the Labor government and cabinet.

In relation to the fight that the Premier and Minister MacTiernan were having, that was about whether the Labor Party should run a candidate in the North West Central by-election that we are currently in the middle of.

Mr R.S. Love: What was the result?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The Premier, because the Premier always wins, as we are told, won that argument. Minister MacTiernan, the Minister for Regional Development, who had a candidate waiting in the wings, was told that that would not be happening and was overridden. We can imagine that that did not go down well. It has not gone down that well in the electorate. They do not understand and, in fact, see it as the Labor Party and this government turning their back on those communities.

We have all heard over a number of months and years of the challenges that they are facing and also the opportunities and aspirations that those communities have to do better. I think that gets lost in the argument that when a local member brings those things to Parliament and asks those questions, they are asking them on behalf of their community. Quite frankly, the way the government has responded to some of those questions, whether it was the former member for North West Central, myself or others who have been asking those questions, the respect that we would expect when we are doing that on behalf of our community was simply not there. It is very disappointing. It has flowed right through to Labor making the decision that it would not enter the fight and has no interest in representing that electorate. I think that is very poor form.

Obviously there are some challenges in managing a party with the large number of members this government has. That was always going to be the case. An unfortunate part of that is we have some serious challenges facing our state, but we also have the capacity to respond quickly. We have more financial capacity than any state in the nation. We have the ability to respond, if legislative reform is required. We saw that happen with the rubber stamping of a Labor pet project that needed to be rammed through Parliament—electoral reform being a case in point. Changes can be delivered very quickly if there is a political desire to do so. What we will see, I think, is more and more disruption and destruction within Labor ranks.

The last point I will talk to briefly as I know some of my colleagues will pick up on it. It relates to Minister Johnston and Minister MacTiernan. Much has been spoken about Minister MacTiernan, so I will leave that to someone else. I want to put on record my thoughts about Minister Johnston's responsibility in the handing down of the FIFO report from the inquiry chaired by the member for Vasse but also supported by a number of his own government members. When the member for Vasse delivered the committee's report to the chamber, the minister was, I assume, called away on urgent parliamentary business. It was a very poor look not to be in the chamber to receive what was a groundbreaking report that has serious implications for the sector he has responsibility for in terms of regulatory responsibility.

The member for Vasse and I were at a forum a couple of weeks ago that was hosted by the Chamber of Minerals and Energy. It was an outward showing, at least, that there was a willingness to have this open discussion—uncomfortably, I imagine—around what needs to be done from an industry perspective. It was disappointing that no-one from government was represented in that room. Certainly, when I have heard Minister Johnston speaking on this matter all of the onus in his eyes is on industry. I have no issue that industry has responsibility for keeping its house in order and it needs to provide safe workplaces. I do not want anyone to misunderstand me when I say what I am about to say. One of the points made at this forum by Kate Jenkins, the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, was that the regulatory and policing role of government is equally as important as industry's role, otherwise we would expect everyone in Western Australia to do the right thing. When people get in their cars they would put on their seat belts; they would not break into houses; and we would not need the police. I have not heard Minister Johnston take responsibility for the role that the regulator has in this. The commissioner's words were telling: it is incredibly important to have an effective regulator. That comes under the immediate responsibility of Minister Johnston. That is a failure of the minister and one that needs to be addressed. It is the elephant in the room. The minister cannot make strong comments about industry and not then back them up by acknowledging the government has a role to play, which is directly the minister's responsibility. That needs to be addressed.

We could touch on a number of issues with other ministers, but no doubt when the government comes back with its answer, there will be grab bag of criticisms dredged up about the previous Liberal–National government, because that is how this government operates in this place. Members should remember that this government has been here for five years. This government is in charge. This government has unprecedented numbers in this place and a budget surplus that allows it to shift things at a very quick pace. Expectations have been high in the community, and the bar should be a very high for someone to make it into cabinet, with the amount of power that this government has. Quite frankly, a couple of ministers need to go immediately.

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe — Leader of the Liberal Party) [4.33 pm]: I join the Leader of the Opposition in debate on this motion. It is fascinating when members sit on this side. We are busy most of the time because of the small number of members and the body of work that has to be done as an opposition. It was interesting today to hear the Premier try to make some pathetic comparison between the number of shadow portfolios we hold and the number of ministries held by certain ministers. Clearly, it is an arithmetic reality for us. We all know that a minister has a significant formal workload above and beyond that of a shadow minister. It is interesting, looking at the Premier's body language and hearing his response. He is the Premier of this state and he has record high popularity. He is ascendant in Parliament, which is historic for a Labor government. He has absolute control of both houses of Parliament. He could institute constitutional amendments in the Parliament of his own volition with his own numbers. Yet what do we see the Premier do? To say that his language is unparliamentary is a considerable understatement. We just hear slurs and insults from the Premier to this side. Because he is unable to defend his ministers, he responds by making puerile childish insults to members on this side. That is not the way a Premier

Ms Mia Davies; Dr David Honey; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr David Templeman; Mr Shane Love; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Bill Johnston

behaves. It is not the way we would expect a Premier with that level of public and parliamentary support to behave, but that is all he resorts to. Before I came into this chamber, a couple of former members of Parliament spoke to me. Hon Cheryl Edwardes and Hon Richard Court gave me some coaching and guidance on how I could go about this role. One of the things they said was to stay in the chamber, observe body language, behaviour and the interactions of people. When I observed the Premier's body language, which I did yesterday during question time and the matter of public interest, and again today in question time, it was clear that the Premier is deeply embarrassed by the poor performance of a number of his ministers. I can see it on his face.

Ms S.F. McGurk: Time and time again you show your emotional intelligence.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I can tell the minister that time and again I see a Premier who looks frustrated and angry at your poor performance and that of other members in this place who cannot even answer questions.

Ms C.M. Rowe interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: We have the Minister for Community Services today with a Dorothy Dixier. What was the substantive part of her answer? It was what the previous government did. The government has been in power for five years and I can tell the minister that I have visited those communities in the north during the time I have been here. What has happened every time I have been there, minister? The crime rate is worse; the dysfunction is worse. There are more children on the streets and more children not going to school. The minister is not doing her job. The minister loves to talk about her programs. She loves to talk about the Target 120 program and the Target 120 Plus program. What I have seen on the ground in those communities is heartbreaking. It gives me no pleasure to say that. Minister, I desperately and genuinely hope that those programs work, but what I see after five years of this government are communities with substantially greater dysfunction than when I first came into this place.

Ms C.M. Rowe interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Member, can I suggest that, like me, you get out and visit those communities.

Ms C.M. Rowe interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member!

Dr D.J. HONEY: If the member went to Carnarvon today —

Ms C.M. Rowe interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Belmont!

Dr D.J. HONEY: If the member went to Carnarvon today, she would see dozens and dozens of school-age children on the street and not at school, and no-one is doing anything about it. Today there would be dozens of them, as there was the last two times I was there in recent history. It is heartbreaking. It breaks my heart to see those children not having a future. We saw the Minister for Housing today. He got up to give an answer because he had to redo his answer to the question I asked yesterday with a Dorothy Dixier from a member on his own side, because he could not answer it properly yesterday. His prepared answer today proved that even by the end of this year, the government will not have replaced the number of houses that have been sold. The Minister for Police, in some conflated effort today, tried to say that our criticism of him is a criticism of the police. As I pointed out by interjection and will say now as part of my contribution, members on this side hold the police in high regard. I worked closely with the police for six and a half years of my career. I have deep respect for the police and the work they have to do and for the job they do. I do not have deep respect for the job the Minister for Police is doing because he is clearly failing those communities.

Most of all today we saw the Minister for Corrective Services carrying out some union fight in Parliament. He gave us some detailed legal opinion on whether a secretary of a particular union is legitimately in their position. I am a student and I like to study. One of the things I looked at was the WA Labor website and its page on affiliated unions. The last entry on that page is the Western Australian Prison Officers' Union of Workers and its secretary is Andy Smith, the very person that the minister went to some lengths to launch quite a vitriolic attack against using our Parliament's time. But the Labor Party's website says that it is an affiliated union. If it is so bad, why is it affiliated with the Labor Party? Clearly, the minister has raised an issue there, but that official website also says that he is the secretary of that union. As I say, I am not quite sure what was going on there, but, clearly, not all is happy under the Labor tent with the unions.

In a past life in opposition, the current Premier said that ministers should not be overloaded. Back in 2013, it was reported —

The Opposition Leader Mark McGowan has called on the Deputy Premier Kim Hames to resign from one of his ministerial portfolios.

Ms Mia Davies; Dr David Honey; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr David Templeman; Mr Shane Love; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Bill Johnston

Because he held both the health and tourism portfolios, he should resign. Back in 2013, the Premier thought it was important that ministers were not overloaded with various portfolios. I will not go through the whole article because there is too much ground to cover, but ambulance ramping levels were the basis for saying that. Ambulance ramping was under 1 000 hours, but Mark McGowan thought that that minister should resign from one of his portfolios. The current Minister for Health is overseeing almost 8 000 hours of ambulance ramping and, yet, that minister is still in their job. What a farce!

Ms L. Mettam: It is almost 7 000 hours.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I apologise and stand corrected. It is almost 7 000 hours; it is almost a moot point, member. I will not go on because I know that the member for Vasse will cover this, but I thought it was fascinating that the then opposition leader would call for the Minister for Health at the time to give up a portfolio when his own minister at the moment is overseeing ramping that is seven times greater than it was back then. Nevertheless, he has clearly gone through some epiphany over the ensuing years.

It is fair to say that *The West Australian* has given this government a pretty good run. During the pandemic period, it provided strong support to and championed the Premier and the government. I think that twice there were cartoons of the Premier dressed in a superman costume saving the people of Western Australia in some metaphoric form. I do not think that members on the other side could say that *The West Australian* has been weaponised against them in any form or that it has been overly harsh, but the good journalists and the editor of *The West Australian* now see this government as becoming dysfunctional and failing the Premier in what he is trying to achieve in this state. The editorial —

Ms C.M. Rowe interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Belmont!

Dr D.J. HONEY: She is like a cocky.

Ms C.M. Rowe interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr D.A.E. Scaife): Member for Belmont! Please, we do not need it. Can I honestly say that I allow a little bit of back and forth in these debates, but, Leader of the Liberal Party, you are technically breaching standing orders because you are not directing your comments through the chair.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Well —

The ACTING SPEAKER: No, I do not need the commentary about it. I allow some interjections in those circumstances, but, to the member for Belmont, it is repetitive and we do not need it.

Dr D.J. HONEY: The editorial in *The West* of 27 July 2022 states —

Almost 18 months into his second term as Premier and Mark McGowan still has the Midas touch.

They clearly think that the Premier is doing a good job —

He is undoubtedly the most popular leader in the country and WA Labor is still able to rely on his star power to deflect any negative headlines.

And that's a good thing, because those headlines are starting to come thick and fast as it becomes increasingly clear he's surrounded by subpar talent in his ministry.

The article goes on to talk about the issue of organised crime —

The union rightly warned that a decision like this “gives the impression that the prison —

This is about corrective services —

is actually run by criminal elements”.

It talks a little more about that later and then lists the other ministers who are failing the Premier.

Another article by Peter Law in *The West Australian* of Friday, 29 July nominally goes through to talk about Hon Alannah MacTiernan retiring at the next election. It also points out that a number of ministers in this government should be retired for the job that they are not doing in government. As I said, I do not think members on the other side could accuse *The West* of being unfairly harsh on them, but those journalists have seen what we see on this side—that is, ministers not doing their jobs.

I will not go on about health anymore because my colleague will talk about that. However, we will come across a number of portfolios and other speakers will talk about transport and Metronet. The Minister for Transport oversees 50 per cent of the government's capital spend and she is utterly failing to deliver. The Forrestfield–Airport Link is still held up. We hear all sorts of stories about why. It could be due to ventilation issues or that the government

Ms Mia Davies; Dr David Honey; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr David Templeman; Mr Shane Love; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Bill Johnston

is incapable of attracting drivers. Nevertheless, it is a massive spend that has sucked up all the money that other ministers could be using to solve their problems.

I want to come to the Minister for Energy. From time to time, I make positive comments about members on the other side of the house. Some of my colleagues say that no, I should never do that or say something positive, but I have said in this place a number of times that Minister Johnston in his various guises is a hardworking minister. I suspect that he is probably the hardest working minister who has dedicated his life through the union and through Parliament in public service. I do not have a personal grudge against the minister and I respect the amount of work that that minister does, but it is very clear that the minister has too much work to do. As I pointed out today in question time in my supplementary question, there are 39 Labor members in this chamber, some of whom are not in the ministry but are in this chamber at the moment and are extremely capable. We have a minister who has been quite obviously overworked. Why can the Premier not take some of that workload and give it to some of the other people in this chamber who would currently have the time to take on that particular role? The energy portfolio of the Minister for Energy has obviously been a passion of his over a long time, like industrial relations, and an area that he has put a lot of focus on. But what do we see in terms of performance in the energy system? We see an energy system in decline. If we look at any measure of the electricity system that we have in this state, we will see it in decline. I will go through just a bit of this because, honestly, it is overwhelming to go through the whole lot and I do not have time to do that.

The Economic Regulation Authority has reported on the number of customers affected by extended interruptions, which is a power outage of 12 hours or more. Those figures rose from 45 000 in 2016–17 to 98 000 in 2019–20, which is not just some idle blip of statistics, and 70 000 last year. That is still 55 per cent higher than when our government was in power. In terms of rural and regional customers, the ERA talked about the standard average electricity outage duration being 290 minutes or nearly five hours. The result last year was about 1 700 minutes of interruptions, or over 28 hours. That is nearly six times higher than the expected minimum standard. The expected minimum standard for rural customers is substantially higher than what we accept in the metropolitan area. Again, regional customers are being treated as second-class citizens.

Yes, sometimes outages are caused by events. Cyclone Seroja had a significant impact. However, in the year before cyclone Seroja, there was nearly 1 400 minutes of interruptions. We have seen a massive increase above the accepted standard. We might even say that that increase is growing. As I have indicated from those statistics, the number of outages has increased quite dramatically.

For a minister who is passionate about this area, it is clear that he has not had time to put in the oversight to make sure that Western Power is doing its work. I have been through this in detail before, and I will not go through it in detail now, but if we look at the age of the network that the minister oversees through Western Power, we see that in almost every single category there has been a reduction in the amount of equipment that is less than five years old. In fact, the whole network is getting older. When we look at things like high-voltage insulators, switchgears, transformers and the like, we see that in every category the equipment is getting older. Therefore, it is no wonder that there are more power blackouts. It is not just because of acts of nature or other events. A quite remarkable storm came through a week or so ago when I was up at Diggers and Dealers. When storms like that come through, we accept that there will be a certain amount of damage.

[Member's time extended.]

Dr D.J. HONEY: In almost every category, there has been a substantial reduction in reliability. If we take a broadbrush approach, the Minister for Energy has to make sure about two things: that there is good reliability of supply and that costs for customers are not too onerous. As I have said, we have seen a significant deterioration in reliability of supply. We have also seen continuing substantial increases in costs for customers.

We have had what I would call little election bribes. Before the state election, the government had put up electricity charges, but it then said, just before the election was held, that every household would be given \$600 for its power charges. That did not do much for people who are homeless and sleeping rough. It did not do much for the many people who cannot afford to buy their own home. However, it was effective and it partly went towards the election result that we saw. That trick had worked once, and, miraculously, just before the federal election, a \$400 bribe came out. That time it was not quite as much.

Ms C.M. Rowe interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Belmont!

Dr D.J. HONEY: That was timed suspiciously, and I think deliberately, just before the federal election, again to entice voters. This has been underlined by a dramatic and substantial increase in connection fees. There was almost a doubling of connection fees in the first term of this government. It does not matter how much electricity people

use; no-one can escape connection fees. We have also had increases in the cost of electricity that are significantly above the average run of inflation.

It is fascinating. I watched the press conference today—online, I should say, not in person—of the Premier and the Minister for Energy on different topics. The Minister for Energy said during that press conference that the government is going to fork out \$10 million to upgrade the electricity network and make it more reliable. This is in the context of what the state government has allocated to Western Power to spend on maintenance. In the five years that this government has been in power, Western Power has underspent both its maintenance and capital budgets by about \$368 million. Western Power has also not paid any dividends for a couple of years, so it has hundreds of millions of dollars of retained dividends. How does \$10 million compare with that over \$300 million underspend? When I have raised this point in the chamber, the minister has said that Western Power does not have to spend that money; that is its indicative budget. This organisation is not maintaining the life of its assets. It is running them all down. We are seeing more blackouts. Surely the minister needs to intercede. As I have said, I suspect that this hardworking minister is distracted because he has too many portfolios. The conclusion is straightforward. The minister needs to shed some of those responsibilities, or one of those responsibilities at least, and focus on the work that he is doing.

We had the dreadful issue just before last Christmas of massive power blackouts across the state. As a consequence of that incident, the minister instituted an inquiry or review. That review took some time to come back. The review made some recommendations. In May, within a couple of days, there were two major power blackouts in Kalgoorlie. The minister told this chamber that nothing could have been done about that, because it is a long way from Kalgoorlie to Muja power station, which is effectively where the power comes from most of the time, and we have to expect that as the lines get longer, we will have blackouts. There is a 60-megawatt Synergy power station in Kalgoorlie that is supposed to provide backup power. We then heard all sorts of excuses from the minister about how it takes Western Power a long time to start up and switch over to that power station; it cannot get it up quickly. I thank the minister for allowing me to visit the Synergy power station. I found out subsequently from that visit, and also through budget estimates, that Synergy can have power going into the network in Kalgoorlie in 15 minutes—not all of it, but some power—and that in half an hour it can provide full power to that network. Furthermore, all the switching is automatic. It is not as though someone has to go out with a long wooden pole and try to move enormous dangerous switches. This is just people pressing buttons in a control room. The problem is that Synergy does not have any workers based in Kalgoorlie and has to rely on Western Power workers to help if there is a problem such as the plant will not start. Synergy told me that it can take up to 36 hours to get a technician from Perth to that station. In the terrible storm that came through Perth last week, when power was lost to the airport and so on, Kalgoorlie did not lose power. It had power the whole time. That is because the minister had given Synergy a direction that it should start up that reserve power station immediately the power from Perth goes out. I assume that Synergy had done that pre-emptively. Therefore, Kalgoorlie did not endure those power outages. For all those months and all that time, the Kalgoorlie community was at risk, and in May it was realised that it was because of that inaction by Western Power.

I now want to move to corrective services, which again is fertile ground. This is a portfolio that either the Minister for Corrective Services should give up, or the Premier should take away from him. We know that industrial relations is the minister's passion. He has told us that. We know that power and energy is also the minister's passion. I accept that that is an area in which the minister has expertise. However, it is quite clear that corrective services is a forgotten child in this minister's purview. I accept that corrective services is not a trivial area and that it is a challenging portfolio. Clearly, groups of people are at the lowest ebb of their life and facing all sorts of disadvantages. We have to not only protect the community from those people, but also provide a service that hopefully rehabilitates those prisoners so they can go on to lead useful lives. That has been the goal of the prison service for a considerable time, not just under this government. We have seen the minister moving prisoners from Banksia Hill—a prison designed for juveniles—and putting them into a purpose-built unit, and I accept that. It is a purpose-adaptive unit at Casuarina Prison, which is a maximum-security prison that houses the worst criminals—murderers, rapists and the many bikies who are in prison. That is the only option to house juvenile prisoners.

I hear again and again from members on the other side that it is all our fault because we did not do enough about this. Of course, the reality is that the government has been in power for five years. We should have another major tertiary hospital. Today at the minister's press conference, he was trying to blame Hon Christian Porter, a former minister in this area, for closing another facility. If the minister were so concerned about it, why has this government not done something about it? It has had plenty of time. The original facility was converted to a centre to rehabilitate young men aged 18 to 28 so that they could go out and enjoy a better life. Of course, this government changed the purpose of that facility to a rehabilitation centre for prisoners who are drug addicts, and it changed the location to Wandoo. The purpose of that centre is good, but it took away a facility for young men and that has meant those young men are being kept in prison while getting that service rather than being kept in a transition centre. In any case, that lies at the feet of this minister. If this minister knew it was a problem, why did he not do something about it?

We have seen further dysfunction. I will not go through the horrendous stories of self-harm of children, but that is an absolute crisis. This is not normal; this is a failure of the government to provide adequate services for children. That is what it is. We have seen prisoners in Banksia Hill, at the behest of guards, apparently, making wood carvings for an external organisation. The prison is indulging in its own personal interests and is getting the prisoners to do it. That is absolutely disgraceful. Again we see the minister waving his hands and saying that it has nothing to do with him and that we should report it to the Corruption and Crime Commission. I respect that Minister Johnston works hard, but the simple reality is, and the evidence is all too plain, that the minister is failing in his portfolios. If he does not resign, he needs to have a portfolio removed from him because he is not doing a proper service to the people of Western Australia.

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe) [5.03 pm]: I also come out in support of the Leader of the Opposition's motion —

That this house calls on the Premier to sack his incompetent ministers after a winter recess that has exposed a raft of delivery failures in key portfolios.

Today I would like to focus on the Minister for Agriculture and Food. We certainly have been asking questions in here about her recent performance and about the lack of confidence the sector has in the minister. If possible, I will also spend a few minutes towards the end of my speech on the Minister for Education and Training. That is another minister who is also in the departure lounge.

It is well known that when the Premier was the Leader of the Opposition, his focus on the Barnett government was that any minister who either had announced or was intending to announce their retirement needed to move on and make sure that they handed their position over to someone else. We have heard over the last couple of days about the number of keen backbenchers. It is time for some of these ministers to go. It was quite bizarre yesterday when I asked the Premier about whether he would be calling for the resignation of the Minister for Agriculture and Food and he said that the minister had said it was clumsy wording and that she had apologised. I am sorry, but that does not cut it. The ag minister has lost the confidence of the sector that she represents. That is the key to the whole argument. It is about representing the sector that the minister is responsible for. The minister needs to have the confidence of the sector. I will be able to give members plenty of examples today whereby the sector has lost confidence in the minister. Today, when the member for Moore asked a question about the Minister for Agriculture and Food, the Premier talked about the Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd function last night and about grain. This matter is about livestock producers, foot-and-mouth disease and the lack of confidence the sector has in the minister handling the livestock sector.

Probably one of the most disappointing elements that we have seen is the failure of the minister to engage with representative organisations such as the Western Australian Farmers Federation and the Pastoralists and Graziers Association. I will refer to a few articles that have come through over the last few weeks since this happened during the winter break when this minister made a very unfortunate statement that a breakout of foot-and-mouth disease could potentially provide cheaper meat and milk. I can assure members that the response from my constituents—I know other members have also had the same response—has been all about the lack of confidence in the minister and disbelief in what this minister has done. I would like to quote from an article called “Its Time” that Trevor Whittington, the CEO of the WA Farmers Federation, wrote. I think some of the paragraphs are spot-on. He writes —

Like governments, Ministers have a use by date. Some Ministers last the full term before going down in an election, others are shuffled out when they fail in their portfolios, some have to be blown out by the opposition, while the Honorable live up to their title and simply fall on their sword when their time is up.

He goes on —

Eighteen months into the second term of the McGowan government, it's becoming obvious that there is one Minister that has missed the opportunity to go out on top.

As we know, the minister certainly has a track record of holding different portfolios. A little bit like the member for Cottesloe, members need to recognise what some ministers have achieved. Certainly, there was no doubt, when I looked back on it, that the farming and ag sector was very interested to see how this minister would perform. It is unfortunate that we have probably come to what I think should be the end in this unfortunate fashion. As Trevor Whittington pointed out —

In hindsight, it is clear that the State Labor Party made a mistake when they allowed her to come back into State Parliament in 2017 after MacTiernan suffered relevance deprivation in Canberra.

They made a second mistake in putting her back into cabinet, then a third, by giving her the agricultural portfolio, a fourth in rolling a younger MP Adele Farina to allow her to move seats and run again at the last election and the Premier has now made a fifth in backing her to stagger on as a lame duck Minister who has clearly lost the confidence of the industry.

I think that sums it up pretty well. As I said to members, within the representative organisations, the president of the Western Australian Farmers Federation, John Hassell, is calling for the minister to resign. The president of the Pastoralists and Graziers Association, Tony Seabrook, is in a state of disbelief, I guess I would say. He has also said that he is angry. The only thing that he is concerned about is that he does not know whether there is anyone in the state Labor Party who is capable of taking on the ag portfolio. They are the sector's concerns. There is no doubt. That has been spoken about by many of my constituents. We only have to listen to the *Country Hour* on a daily basis to hear some of the calls coming in.

One thing that I found really disappointing at the start of this foot-and-mouth disease scenario and after enduring the minister's statements is that when people emailed or contacted the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development with their concerns about FMD, the email that they received in response stated, "Thank you for your email regarding foot-and-mouth disease. The matter you raise falls outside the priority of the Western Australian government and is a matter for the federal government." That sums it up. That is the standard of responsibility that the minister was overseeing. A horrified farmer from Borden sent me that email straightaway and said, "I just cannot believe the response." From there onwards, we see in the minister's statements no interest in listening to the knowledge and experience that has developed over time and a misguided perspective of what agriculture in WA is.

I want to talk about some other elements that have happened over time with the minister. I refer to some of the statements made by our shadow Minister for Agriculture and Food, Hon Colin de Grussa, about Minister MacTiernan. He said —

"The Minister's disregard for the real fears held by producers across the state shows she is not fit to maintain her position and if she won't stand down, the Premier should sack her."

"The Minister's FMD gaffe was just the latest in a long line of activities that put her at odds with the sector she is responsible for."

He also said —

"She has stood with protestors against the live export industry, stacked the animal welfare review panel with animal activists, used a machinery of government diminish the purpose and capacity of the Department of Agriculture, and failed to deliver much-needed updates to WA's biosecurity laws," ...

Finally, he said —

"This Minister has had half a decade to come to grips with the importance of her portfolio but has failed to do so.

"This isn't good enough and she has got to go."

I think that sums up the thoughts of a lot of people in our agricultural sector. There are so many articles that I could refer to here. There are so many articles that have been written by *The West Live*. One article states —

Alannah MacTiernan will quit politics at the next State election, heaping further pressure on Mark McGowan to strip his under fire Cabinet minister of the Agriculture portfolio ...

The Premier was again forced to defend Ms MacTiernan's downplaying of the threat of foot-and-mouth disease, saying she had apologised for her "clumsy language" and claimed "people need to move on".

It is fine for the Premier to say that, but this minister has lost the confidence of the agricultural sector. That is what I am referring to. It is all well and good for the Premier to say, "Look, just move on, you need to stop talking about it, she has apologised", but that is not on. When the minister came into government with the agricultural portfolio, probably the whole industry and the larger sector were intrigued and thought that having someone with her conviction on their side would be a positive change, but it was not long before we came to realise that this was not what this minister wanted to achieve. She wanted to change the landscape to suit her values, and she has a mission. She wants agriculture in WA to look like the picture in her head—full of carbon offsets in our lonely, sandy country; hydrogen stations everywhere; and electric tractors. Firstly, I ask: where are we going to charge our tractors and headers when we are 50 kilometres from a power station? It might happen, but there are a lot of hurdles to overcome before it can happen. We are not Europe; we have vast areas of farming. I cannot help thinking that the minister is all about the big picture and fails to see the detail. Unfortunately, this picture is so far out of the realms of possibility, let alone probability, that the only thing agriculture is getting from this minister is chaos and a complete disregard for most of the people involved in agriculture. When people stop listening to someone, they have no place as a leader, and it is time to forfeit their role. This minister has been given every opportunity to leave the sector. Unfortunately, as I have pointed out, the minister's values are not in alignment with the values of our agricultural sector and especially our livestock sector in its response to foot-and-mouth disease.

I have a couple of other examples that I would like to give. When the minister advocated and urged farmers to give up 20 per cent of their cropping land to plant trees, she said that insects could do what growers had paid chemical companies to do for years. Unfortunately, the minister has not quite got the experience to understand. We plant thousands of trees. I have planted over 50 000 trees on my farm. I understand. We planted them in waterways; we planted them in fence lines; we planted them wherever there is a salt problem. We understand where you need to plant them, but we also understand that when you need to grow crops, you need to have weed and chemical control and you need to use fungicides. We were at a function last night talking about the 24 million tonne crop that Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd has been working through. It received 21.3 million tonnes. I can assure members that many, if not most or just about all, of those broadacre farmers who delivered those crops had to use chemicals and fungicides. They needed to do that weed control. These are the issues.

Unfortunately, we have seen a continuing list of items whereby this minister has worked in contravention with her portfolio. Live export was another one. We have seen the pictures of the minister on the Fremantle Traffic Bridge. We have seen the scenario, and it is very difficult. Once a minister has stood on that bridge with those animal activists opposing live export, it is very hard for her to come into the Legislative Council chamber as Minister for Agriculture and Food and say that she is representing her farmers and her industry, of which live export is an important element. These are the challenges. It even drifted across to federal Parliament. The minister's gaffe on FMD went all the way to federal Parliament, where David Littleproud asked the Prime Minister whether he supported the WA minister in saying that FMD will not be catastrophic.

The minister has two opposing portfolios—hydrogen and agriculture—and that is another issue. Those two industries are now pitted against each other for the same swathes of rural land, and, quite frankly, it is an odd pairing. Josh Zimmerman from *The West Australian* identified that it is a contravening portfolio, if you like. I think this is the opportunity for the Premier to move the minister on.

I once brought up the minister's policy manual, *Call of the Reed Warbler*. The Premier was not quite sure about it. That was three years ago. Elements of that book, such as getting rid of glyphosate and all of those things, do not add up when we produce a 24 million-tonne grain crop in Western Australia. As far as I am concerned, the minister needs to go. This is a demonstration of the issues that we and the agricultural sector are up against. I wanted to put that out there today. When the Premier just says, "Oh, it's clumsy wording, don't worry about it. Let's move on", that is not good enough. The agricultural sector has lost confidence in the minister, and that is where the real issue lies. Our sector has not got any confidence in this minister.

In closing, I would like to quickly run through some issues. The Leader of the Opposition spoke about many ministers whom we are starting to become concerned about. The other one in the departure lounge is the Minister for Education and Training. One element that concerns me is the looming teacher shortages. There are truancy issues in the north of the state. Halls Creek was highlighted recently. We have had teachers and principals leaving in droves from fatigue. Anecdotally, I hear that the system is broken and it has led them to the point that they are leaving their vocation. We have 25 per cent of graduates leaving or contemplating leaving within five years of graduating. That is a real concern.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: This issue of fatigue in the regions really concerns me. As we know, the regions were hit hard by this minister early on in her tenure. There were the decisions on School of the Air, Moora Residential College and the boarding away from home allowance. The Isolated Children's Parents' Association calls time after time, year after year, for this minister to look at the boarding away from home allowance, which she slashed from royalties for regions and cut down to a massive extent. Time after time, year after year, the association calls for that at its conference. The minister says, "We'll have another look at it. I've blown them off for another few months, another year or two", and that is what it comes to. These are the sorts of things that have led to a lack of confidence in this minister.

I turn to housing in the regions for principals and teachers. I cannot begin to say how substandard it is. If the minister actually thinks that she is going to attract people into the regions with some of that housing out there, she really needs to take a good, hard look at it.

They are some of the issues. I know that we have people with teaching backgrounds in the chamber who might like to step into the fold. I know the member for Wanneroo over there has connections in the State School Teachers' Union. No doubt the member for Southern River fancies himself as the next education minister. We also have the member for Collie-Preston who has been a deputy principal. I am concerned that, once again, another minister has announced her retirement. The Premier is obviously going to have to do a reshuffle because many of these ministers have been —

Ms S. Winton interjected.

Point of Order

Ms Mia Davies; Dr David Honey; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr David Templeman; Mr Shane Love; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Bill Johnston

Dr D.J. HONEY: We have heard repetitive and unwelcome interjections from the member and I ask you to call her to desist.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Thank you, Acting Speaker —

Ms S. Winton interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am not taking interjections.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms C.M. Collins): Member for Wanneroo, he is not taking interjections.

Ms S.E. Winton: But he mentioned my name!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Roe, you were inviting interjections, so please keep to your point.

Debate Resumed

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I will just come back to the subject. There have been very disappointing performances from some of our senior ministers. The Premier needs to take a good, hard look at a cabinet reshuffle. Now is the opportunity. We will certainly support him in that reshuffle.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [5.24 pm]: This afternoon, I have been listening very closely to this debate, and there is a bit of a pattern here, but I am happy to make a contribution and, of course, defend a number of ministers whom the opposition has attacked. I will also compare the current government with the previous government, which we know was dismal. Before the previous government's demise at the 2017 election, in the Nationals WA's very own cherished portfolio of agriculture there had seen an embarrassing cavalcade of seven ministers for agriculture. The government had overseen dramatic cuts to important institutions like the Department of Agriculture and Food and the various important research entities that help to ensure that our agricultural, horticultural and other primary producing industries are robust and can adapt to the changing nature of climate, market forces or whatever it might be. I am sure members opposite will remember that in the cavalcade of ministers who held the position of minister for agriculture in the previous cabinet, the position sort of waxed between a National Party member and a Liberal Party member. The opposition's history of holding that portfolio is quite embarrassing. The very interests that opposition members seek to argue for and keep raising here were not progressed when the Nationals were in power and were around the cabinet table. We know from history that there were times when members of the National Party would basically not participate in some of the cabinet deliberations. That was part of its strange, strange commitment to what was, I think, called an alliance.

When the National Party was in power, tens and tens of millions of dollars were ripped out of the agriculture portfolio and the Department of Agriculture and Food. That money was subsequently returned under the McGowan Labor government. The National Party, which purports to be the only party that understands and represents the regions, saw regional employees, including those in the agriculture department, lose their positions. When the National Party was in government, full-time equivalents were lost in the regions, the very places that the National Party argues it represents. What was happening around the cabinet table when that sort of stuff was put forward, particularly in the Expenditure Review Committee process? What was the National Party doing? What were National Party ministers doing, particularly those who might have held a position during that interim period of eight and a half years, to prevent those cuts to the budget? For a substantial period of time the state was booming—apart from the fact the former government blew the budget, of course. The previous government was quite happy to go on a spending spree and put us into spiralling debt, but at the same time it cut one of the portfolios that the opposition is now criticising under the stewardship of the honourable member in the other place. It is a great example of absolute hypocrisy.

I want to refer members opposite to what this government has invested into the agriculture and food portfolio since being elected in 2017, despite the budget position we faced when we first came to government in 2017 as a result of spiralling debt and record deficits under the former government. Despite being left with those economic circumstances by those opposite—the National Party and the Liberal Party—and the fiscally responsible effort by the McGowan government in its first term to restore the budget and put it back on a trajectory of delivering surpluses but also having a clear focus on making sure that spending in priority areas was maintained, be it in health or education, we made sure that we restored budgets to important government services in regional Western Australia, including the agriculture department. I want to go through some of them. A total of \$131.5 million was returned to the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development in the 2019–20 budget because the National Party, aided and abetted by the then dominant numbers in the Liberal Party, had cut it to the bone. That is the truth, the fact and the reality.

Let us not forget—I love mentioning this—the tier 3 rail line. We saw the demise of the railway system in country Western Australia. Under whose stewardship did that occur? It was under the stewardship of the Liberal Party and the National Party—those parties that purport to represent regional Western Australia, with the National Party saying it is the only party that represents the interests of regional Western Australia.

Ms Mia Davies; Dr David Honey; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr David Templeman; Mr Shane Love; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Bill Johnston

Dare I mention the *AvonLink*? The Leader of the Opposition represents the central wheatbelt and my home town of Northam. Good old Northam; I love it. The Nationals wanted to close down that train service. We restored it.

The wave of hypocrisy that comes from those opposite in debates such as this does not stand up at all in the information they provide or in their arguments and criticism of the current Minister for Agriculture and Food. We provided \$131.5 million for DPIRD and \$48 million for grains research. The Premier mentioned during question time this afternoon that representatives of Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd were here last night. We had some great conversations. Thankfully—I am so grateful—in the last couple of years, apart from some pockets, our grain-growing areas of Western Australia have been doing very, very well. I honestly think that every Western Australian is very happy when that occurs. Having been born, having lived and having taught in regional WA, when the farmers do well in grain-growing areas, the broader community does well, and there is a buoyancy. It is great. It is important. I used to teach in Three Springs. I can vividly remember some tough years of drought and low rainfall and the impact that had on not only the harvest, but also the vibrancy and buoyancy of communities.

There is no doubt that this side of the house, the Labor Party, is absolutely committed to making sure that our agricultural regions and our primary industries flourish and are given every opportunity to not only deliver high-quality products to the world and, of course, to other markets in Western Australia and the nation, but also be at the leading edge in research and development.

Visitors —Youth Pride Network

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms C.M. Collins): Leader of the House, I will interrupt you. I want to give a warm welcome to members of the Youth Pride Network, who are in the gallery.

Debate Resumed

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Hello, Youth Pride Network. It is marvellous to see you. Welcome to the Parliament of Western Australia. I am now lambasting the Liberal Party and the National Party for their appalling stewardship of the agriculture portfolio during their eight and a half years of government. In doing so, I am highlighting this government's achievements in the regions, particularly in the areas of investment, research and infrastructure. I want to highlight a couple more, including the \$48 million grains research partnership with the Grains Research and Development Corporation and \$25 million to kickstart the Western Australian agricultural research collaboration to futureproof the state's primary industries. Our research stations have been reinvigorated under this government. I point to a number of them, including one in Katanning in the member for Roe's electorate. We have invested \$8 million to establish a world-class sheep research and net zero demonstration facility in Katanning.

Mr P.J. Rundle: I went to it, even though I didn't get invited.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: They probably did not know who you were. "Who's that fellow over there with the hat?", they asked. That funding of \$8 million is very important. I do not know what the invitation arrangements were but I am sure the member was warmly welcomed.

A total of \$1.8 million was allocated for the Merredin Dryland Research Institute in the Leader of the Opposition's electorate of Central Wheatbelt. We revitalised the Frank Wise Research Institute in Kununurra.

We had a conversation earlier today about the reinstatement of a bill, particularly around biosecurity. In the last budget, this government allocated \$15.1 million to boost our biosecurity capabilities and emergency preparedness. Members should be under no illusion that biosecurity is a critical issue for both state and national governments. Indeed, as we know, in many respects Australia is in the particularly fortunate position of being an island nation. There are parameters that we can ensure are kept strong in order to ensure our biodiversity protections are in place.

We have seen the reversal of the proposed sale of InterGrain, making sure that the capability in Western Australia is maintained. We also won back the national oat breeding program from South Australia. There has been a revamping of the northern beef program with the provision of an extra \$8.3 million. These amounts are adding up. The McGowan Labor government has invested tens of millions of dollars because it absolutely values the agricultural and primary industry sector of Western Australia.

To address and respond to the pressures of climate change and the changing nature of soils, we re-established the Soil and Land Conservation Council after it had sat in hiatus for 16 years. For eight and a half of those years, who was in power? We restored that. It is important that we have a council that is focused on the issues of soil and land conservation. We provided \$15 million for the agriculture climate resilience fund, again to help and support farmers to respond and adapt to climate change. As we all know, climate change remains one of those key issues the planet faces, including Western Australia. We have to get better. We have to mitigate and respond. We are putting money into that response to the climate change challenge.

Ms Mia Davies; Dr David Honey; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr David Templeman; Mr Shane Love; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Bill Johnston

Carbon farming on the pastoral estate has been allowed for the first time. It not only provides income for pastoralists, but also supports rangelands regeneration. We have boosted funding to natural resource management projects by \$8.5 million per annum, which is double the amount of \$4 million that was provided by the previous government.

Mr R.S. Love: That's certainly not true.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I do not know what the previous government was arguing about those things.

Does the member want to talk about the wine industry? It is an important industry. There is \$3 million towards the wine industry export growth partnership and \$6 million for a project to build international demand for Western Australia's high-quality wines. The Western Australian wine industry has a great reputation. It is a great product to promote and sell overseas. It is tremendous that we are investing to make sure that that is done effectively.

There is \$30 million to manage the impact of wild dogs and other feral animals. There are a few ferals across the way there, but I will not talk about them individually! There is \$30 million to manage wild dogs, including repairs to and maintenance of the state barrier fence, the Esperance extension and cell fences in Kalgoorlie and Carnarvon.

Mr P.J. Rundle interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: But the Nationals WA did not do anything in government. That is the point. I like this; they say, "Oh, it's not there." The point is that the Nationals did nothing in government but they bring on motions attacking a minister who has worked particularly hard. She travels extensively through the regions. She meets with everyone. She consults people and talks to them. She gets yelled at and abused by people like the member opposite, but she still fronts up! Why is it that Nationals WA members did not front up to cabinet in the last government? It was because they were gutless and they were useless! They knew they were weak, feeble lettuces! That is what they were. The Nationals could not stand up for regional Western Australia in the cabinet room and they let all these things happen when the budgets were handed down in the last government by, I think, four different Treasurers, by the way. It might have been more. At one stage, due to the indiscretions of one of them, the Premier of the day, Colin Barnett, had to suddenly step in to deliver the budget when he was not essentially the Treasurer at the time. That is what happened. Where were the Nationals? The Nationals come into the chamber and bark and hiss. They come out of their cages like hyenas and attack, but they have no basis at all for their attacks because they did nothing during the eight and a half years they were in power. In fact, the Nationals could not even carry an argument. Members on this side of the chamber understand that Nationals WA members walked out of some cabinet meetings, abrogating their responsibility to even debate in the cabinet room the important issues that affected their constituencies and had a direct impact on the whole constituency of Western Australia.

Nationals WA members should not come in here and start to hiss and bark and yell and growl when they know they have an appalling history in the job. They attack and they abuse people. They love abusing Alannah MacTiernan and asking other people to do that. I tell you what: I will defend her because I have known her for a long time. People can never question her commitment to getting outcomes and wanting to get things done. She has a history of doing that. Does she make mistakes? Yes, she does. She apologised for her comments on the foot-and-mouth issue. As the Premier said, yes, her comments were clumsy, but she has done amazing things in her current portfolio and in portfolios she has held in previous governments, including what she has done for where I live, in Mandurah, by bringing the railway line there. I think she deserves a bit of respect in that case because she is bloody hardworking and I respect her commitment. I know that as Minister for Regional Development, she goes to all the regions she represents. She is there all the time consulting, engaging with and talking to people. She cops things when it is a fair cop, but she is out there trying to find solutions, and I have outlined a number of them. Be it restoring the integrity of departments such as the now Department of Agriculture and Food, or restoring research budgets so that we are actually leading edge with our research, knowledge and experience on how climate change has changed the nature of how we grow and produce things, she is spearheading work on import stuff and I admire her for it. She makes mistakes, but she has a go! If Nationals WA members had had a go when they were on this side of the chamber, representing their constituents and holding positions in cabinet, we would not have had to restore \$131.5 million to the ag department. The Nationals let that happen and they should be condemned for it, yet they condemn the Minister for Agriculture and Food.

The minister has done other stuff on the hydrogen industry. It is a very important industry in the basket of how we will deal with energy into the future. She is spearheading a hydrogen strategy for Western Australia. It is a field I do not profess to know anything about, but I understand the importance of making sure that we are at the leading edge on research and effort in that field. She is spearheading it. The government has been able to demonstrate that belief in and commitment to hydrogen through its budget provisions. We have a budget allocation of \$160 million to support a renewable hydrogen industry in Western Australia. That should be commended, not condemned, because it is a direct example of having the policy position we need and backing it up with action and investment. That is an example in the hydrogen area but there are a number of others. There is a \$10 million commitment to the hydrogen fuel transport program. Again, whether it is public transport or whatever, we are looking at the effective

Ms Mia Davies; Dr David Honey; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr David Templeman; Mr Shane Love; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Bill Johnston

use of hydrogen as a power source for those entities. The \$70 million investment towards the Pilbara hydrogen hub is another very important investment in the Pilbara. There is \$47.5 million to activate Oakajee. How long did the previous government talk about Oakajee?

Mr R.S. Love: She was the minister who sat on it.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: What did the member do for eight and a half years? The previous government talked about it for eight and a half years; it did not do anything. The government has put in money and it is targeted. The Oakajee Strategic Industrial Area in the midwest has a hydrogen hub.

There are issues around regional development. I could go on to talk about the \$14 million to the digital farm grants program that will allow more than 2 000 farm businesses to be brought onto enterprise-grade broadband, the \$8.1 million boost to the eConnected digital data service to support agricultural business competitiveness or the \$4.6 million to upgrade the Albany and Geraldton Bureau of Meteorology sites to Doppler standard. These are really important investments in regional Western Australia that will deliver positive outcomes for the people who live, work and have important primary production businesses there.

For the massive challenge and important step forward needed of the just transition in Collie, there is a \$100 million investment to stimulate new industries. The government recognises that the transition requires investment, and that is what it is doing through this Minister for Regional Development. There is \$45.8 million for the regional economic development grants. They are very important in my area of the Peel region. Lots of businesses are recipients of RED grants. They are focused on stimulating and providing continuing support to grassroots business development and innovation to create local regional jobs—absolutely. It is a very important program. The communities that the Nationals WA purport to represent have been benefiting directly from those grants. A number of businesses in all the regions have been recipients of RED grants. It is a program that the government will continue to roll out because it recognises that by investing in and supporting innovative existing and emerging businesses, this will not only increase opportunities within the regions—maximise opportunities there—but also create regional jobs for regional people. That is part of the picture of where the government wants to take regional Western Australia.

Can I go further? There is \$40.4 million for the Kimberley youth and community justice response, including \$15 million for an on-country residential facility. Again, the government recognises that there are tough issues in many communities. The member for Kimberley, who is here tonight, has been absolutely remarkable in bringing to Parliament and highlighting to various ministers important issues that need to be addressed, and the government has responded.

The Minister for Community Services is also a pivotal part of that drive, because the government recognises that it has to do stuff and it has to back it up with investment. That is what it has done. The last budget contained numerous commitments to investment that focus on making sure that people in regional Western Australia have better access to services and opportunities so that they can flourish. I meet and talk to people in regional Western Australia and they are great people. It distresses me sometimes the way that the Nationals WA and the Liberal Party seek to drive this wedge between people who live in the metropolitan area and those in the regions. There is no difference. We are all Western Australians, for goodness sake. We all want to see people flourish and businesses grow—no matter where they are—so they can employ local people. We want to promote our regions in terms of business investment and tourism potential. We want to make sure that if a person chooses to live in Western Australia, whether regional Western Australia, rural parts or very remote parts, they know they will be supported. It is not easy. We know that. There are issues around the tyranny of distance. We know there are issues around the capacity to house people and have people live and work in places like that, but the government is focused on addressing those issues and finding solutions, and is backing it up by investment in its budgets.

I will mention the member for Bunbury, because he is in the chamber. We invested \$78 million in stage 3 of the Bunbury waterfront transformation. I have been there a couple of times, and I am very jealous. We have a similar program in Mandurah with our foreshore development. The Bunbury waterfront is much longer than Mandurah's waterfront in lineal length. Those investments in regional centres that enhance the liveability, attractiveness and ambience of those places mean that people who might seek to open a business there, whether it is in hospitality and tourism or ancillary support services, are provided with an added incentive because those places have been enhanced. People are proud of where they live. They recognise that there is a real future there, and that is drawn out by population increases in the south west in particular. Even though the member for Bunbury and I will continue to argue—until this place legislates against it—Mandurah is of course the second-largest city in Western Australia. That is fact. He and I will disagree. Former members for Bunbury and I have disagreed. John Castrilli and I had many arguments about this, as did Tony Dean, his predecessor, and I. Those were the two members prior to the current member for Bunbury. Members can look at the former Gallop government's initial investment in Geraldton. I remember this because Labor came to power in 2001. The investment in Geraldton turned the face of Geraldton back to the water; it had turned its back on the water because the railway line used to go along the foreshore. That

Ms Mia Davies; Dr David Honey; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr David Templeman; Mr Shane Love; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Bill Johnston

investment under a Labor government changed all of that. That was the start of the rejuvenation of and the aspirations for Geraldton. We have continued to do that. We have the expansive hospital expansion also happening there. Investment is happening in a number of areas in Geraldton. I mentioned the Oakajee project.

This government has focused tens of millions of dollars on important regional centres. I mentioned the waterfront project in Bunbury, which is important. We invested \$187.5 million into the Spoilbank Marina project. Those members who have been to Broome recently will know about the new jetty and the new work being done at Town Beach, which were all supported and encouraged by good collaboration with the local government. The member for Kimberley is well across this because she championed the investment in infrastructure there, like the Chinatown reinvestment program. It is outstanding. What does this investment do? It lifts the whole perception of and opportunity for the place. That is happening in various regional areas in Western Australia.

I know other members want to speak so I will finish on legislative reform. Being the Leader of the House, I chair the Legislation Committee. I have to tell members that there are bills that might not necessarily be seen by people as important, but the minister in the other place Hon Alannah MacTiernan really championed them, including in the area of veterinary practice, modernising our Veterinary Practice Act, for example. I can remember a vet in Mandurah years ago lobbying me strongly about the importance of reform in that area. He was part of the consultation process. He can no longer practise because of health reasons, but he came here to watch that piece of legislation pass this place and the other place, because it was important to a whole number of issues around veterinary practice. There has been modernisation of the Agricultural Produce Commission Act, and we commissioned reviews of the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act. We have amended the Industrial Hemp Act and modernised the Soil and Land Conservation Act. We have reinstated the effectiveness and skills base of the Soil and Land Conservation Council. All this was done through the efforts of Minister MacTiernan. She also delivered the Forrest Highway, the Mandurah rail line, which I mentioned, and the Champion Lakes development in the electorate of the member for Armadale, which might even straddle the electorate of the member for Thornlie as well, although I may be wrong. I will defend Hon Alannah MacTiernan and I will keep defending her.

In its second term, the McGowan Labor government is committed to doing the very best for Western Australia. I can assure members that as I look around the cabinet table, I know the people there are invested strongly in not only their portfolios, but also the deeper and broader interests of Western Australia. When I compare the robustness, commitment, dedication, hard work and focus on making sure, as we did in the last two and a half years, that Western Australians were kept safe and our economy continued to grow even when COVID was ravaging our nation and other nations around the world, we made sure we positioned Western Australia as best as possible under those circumstances. We do not know what further circumstances we will face. We can only guess. There are obviously political instabilities that could impact the nation and our trading status. We could have another pandemic, and we could face a range of other challenges, but I can tell members that the people of Western Australia are confident that the government they have in Western Australia is focused on their best interests. We are focused on making sure we continue to position Western Australia in a strong financial economic position. Over the last six months we have been rewarded for that, whether in economic ratings, record low unemployment levels, the highest job participation rates in the nation and being recognised worldwide as one of the safest places to do business and to visit. Of course, we are recognised as one of the few places that was able to respond with timely action, focused attention and hard work to position ourselves in the situation that COVID dealt up. We are the envy of most states and territories in Australia. If we look at the budget circumstances of Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania, they pale into insignificance in the robustness of the economy and the position we are in, with great support and effort by Western Australians. We have positioned ourselves in a remarkably robust way. That is because we have committed ministers whom members opposite have shamefully condemned today. Opposition members should really hold up a mirror to themselves, because the reflection they will see in that mirror would certainly not match the calibre of the effort of the ministers they have had a go at today.

I assure Western Australians that no matter where they live, whether in the Kimberley, central wheatbelt, south west, great southern, Gascoyne, goldfields or Peel, where I live, that we are committed to making sure that we continue to do the best job we possibly can. The opposition will find that the broad proportion of people understand that. We will keep doing as best we can and we have the evidence to demonstrate that it is working.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms C.M. Collins): Member for Moore.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [6.00 pm]: Thank you, Acting Speaker. It seemed to be a bit of a race between me and the member for Morley, but I am glad that I won!

It is ironic that the Leader of the House finished his contribution to the debate by talking about the legislative program of the Minister for Agriculture and Food because the discussion point today was the failure of this house to be able to proceed with the Animal Welfare and Trespass Legislation Amendment Bill 2021, which is legislation that has been kicking around since 2019. It has not progressed. It is very strange that the Leader of the House defended the minister on the basis of a legislative program that has been very tardy indeed.

Further, the Leader of the House commented on the Minister for Agriculture and Food's role as the Minister for Regional Development and her commitment to ensuring that communities are a nice place to live. I remember when she became minister, she referred to programs such as petunia planting as a waste of money. Maybe that explains why since she has been Minister for Regional Development there has been close to \$2 billion in cost shift in the budget and an estimated \$815 million has come out of the budget from royalties for regions over the forward estimates. Nearly \$3 billion has been ripped out of the budget to pay for things like the orange school bus service, vocational education regional subsidies and country water subsidies that in some years have been worth up to \$370 million. I also point out that \$36 million was used to pay for education assistants and \$224 million for remote services. Those things would normally be paid for by government, but this government chose to pay for those things out of the royalties for regions program.

Also, in his defence of the hapless Minister for Agriculture and Food, the Leader of the House pointed out that Nationals WA members have no commitment to agriculture and that funding for agriculture had fallen. On the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development website there is still a webpage titled "Seizing the Opportunity Agriculture". It states —

Seizing the Opportunity Agriculture is a \$350million initiative made possible by the State Government's Royalties for Regions program.

That was actually made possible by the Nationals. Our election commitment in 2013 was to start the Seizing the Opportunity Agriculture initiative. We wanted to ensure that money going into agriculture would be directed to programs that would have great outcomes for the farming community. We invested in programs such as the agricultural sciences and research development fund, the Asian Market Success fund and Strengthening WA's Agricultural Biosecurity Defences, which is a program that we introduced in 2013 and it is back. Still on that webpage are links to "Boosting Business Skills of Agrifood Business", "Boosting Grains Research and Development Support", "WA Agricultural Branding", "Food Industry Innovation", "Helping Grain Growers to Better Manage Risk", "Building an Empowered WA Agrifood Sector" and "Infrastructure Audit and Investment Fund". That fund was the first real attempt in a long time to see what critical supply chain issues exist in Western Australia. We foresaw problems that have manifested in recent years and we were prepared to invest money in dealing with those issues. Of course, one program that this government cut when it came to power was a program to fund some necessary investments to overcome the infrastructure challenges that we saw in getting products to port and getting inputs out to farms and regional areas. We also funded the Muresk Institute agriculture degree and diploma program, and the Northern Beef Futures project. There was the sheep industry business innovation project and Katanning in the member for Roe's electorate received the major funding for that. There was also the WA Open for Business project and the Water for Food program, which expanded over the years and became a very important program for unlocking some of the vast potential of untapped and unknown water assets, especially in the north of the state. In areas that were thought to have limits to the amount of water that was available, drilling showed that there were more water sources that were not yet tapped and other areas could be used for irrigation. I think all that sort of work is pretty well on the backburner under this government.

I want to put it out there that the nonsense that is peddled that the Nationals actually were not funding serious agricultural programs when the previous government was in place is completely wrong. It was funded in more of a program sense, rather than just pouring money generally into the department and having no surety of the outcome. We wanted to see specific outcomes from the department, so we funded specific programs that could be delivered. I think that that is an excellent way to fund things. It is a pity that when this government came in, it chose to cut back so many of those programs, as it did with many other programs that were funded by royalties for regions—under this very regional development minister. This included funding for Moora Residential College and a vast number of programs that were beneficial to the state. Funding for transport, education and health programs was slashed when this government came in and that money was redirected to the city. Government members wonder why we talk about a city–country divide. That is why.

The minister is so tin-eared that she said in the middle of a dire situation for Western Australian livestock producers that all it will mean is that there will be cheaper meat and milk. I think they were the words she used. The point is not that she is not hard working or that she does not have a track record in other areas; the problem is that the Minister for Agriculture and Food is clearly in the departure lounge. She is not going to be here after the next election. She has had her opportunity and there are other people with enthusiasm and knowledge who could be doing a better job than her. We know that she has never fully understood the people who are involved in agriculture. That is the problem. She does not understand the industry. She does not understand the people and she seeks to impose her view of the world on the industry. That is why it does not work. That is the problem. She does not think as a champion of agriculture; she thinks as a person who is championing Alannah MacTiernan's view of what agriculture should look like. That is insulting to the people and generations of families who have spent their lives learning about the land. Many of them are degree educated in agribusiness or related agricultural areas. Those people have years of experience

and have much broader experience than just on their farm. To be told like schoolchildren that this is the view of the world that will be imposed on them is a disgrace. That is the problem with that minister. It has always been the problem with that minister in the role of Minister for Agriculture and Food and that is one of the reasons she should go.

The Premier must surely know that her view of the world is the only view of the world. I understand that his interaction with her in Karratha, as reported, has led to a bit of a rift in the Labor Party over the whole business of not running a Labor candidate in North West Central. I understand why the Premier does not want to run a candidate in the North West Central by-election. The first thing the government did when it came to office was to slash all regional representation out of that area. The people of North West Central are seriously expecting that that seat will be dissolved after the next redistribution because of what the government did. It took away regional boundaries and we will see those seats slide into Perth. The electorate of North West Central could well disappear, and the people who live up there know that. I am sure that they must be feeling a bit of voter regret about voting in four Labor members to the upper house. What did those Labor members do, along with the three Labor members in the Agricultural Region? They put up their hands to dissolve their representation and to have a whole-of-state electorate.

I wonder what level of concern there will be in the upper house for the people of Carnarvon in the forty-second Parliament? I doubt that anybody will even know where it is. That is one reason why I think the Labor Party was embarrassed. We also know that the Minister for Police has been busily telling people that there is no problem with crime there. He is hardly going to go up to Carnarvon to stand with a candidate and say, “Look at the job we’re doing.” What candidate would want that? The member for Central Wheatbelt outlined how 71 mothers had to go to a centre in Geraldton or Perth to have their child. The Minister for Health is presiding over this situation. Carnarvon is past the twenty-sixth parallel, yet the women who live there have to go to Perth to have their child. Government members are telling us that they think they are doing a good job and that their government is actually performing well. I have to say that that is not the perception of the people out there. It certainly would not be the perception of people in the North West Central electorate. I can understand why the Premier does not want to risk the reputational loss of getting a hiding in the by-election. He would not get a five per cent swing against him; it would be a far more debilitating outcome. As happened in the tale of the little boy who cried out, “the Emperor has no clothes”, once that sort of thing starts to happen, some of that belief and awe will start to rub off and people will start to question what is going on with this government and with this Premier. He knows that, and it is why he is not prepared to run a candidate in the North West Central by-election. I invite him to run a candidate. I would love for him to put up a candidate and I would love that candidate to get a few hundred votes, because that is about all they would get. The Premier knows that and that is exactly why no action is happening in that regard.

I did not get up here to talk about the Minister for Regional Development; Agriculture and Food because I spoke about her failings at some length at the very start of the day’s proceedings when I spoke on the Animal Welfare and Trespass Legislation Amendment Bill not being progressed through the Parliament. What I want to talk about is another situation. I am glad that the member for Vasse is here because, as we know, the member for Vasse has been a great champion for women in the mining sector as the chair of a very important inquiry into the shocking situation of sexual discrimination, sexual assault and other matters that have been going on in the fly-in fly-out industry. This all came to light originally due to reporting by Caitlyn Rintoul and some articles in *The West Australian*. As a result of some of those articles, questions started to be asked about what is going on in the industry. At that stage, the Minister for Mines and Petroleum had oversight as the minister in charge of the regulator to ensure the safety of those people in camps. I am going to read some extracts of articles written by Caitlyn Rintoul in *The West Australian* of 24 August 2021. One article is headed “Mine site sexual assaults: Department of Mines tried to keep media responses ‘bland’”. The article states —

Secret emails reveal how Energy Minister Bill Johnston’s office and senior media advisers at the Mines Department tried to play down horrific rape allegations by fly-in, fly-out workers that have since resulted in a landmark parliamentary inquiry.

That is the very inquiry that I referred to that was chaired by the member for Vasse. It continues —

Under Freedom of Information laws, The West has obtained a flurry of emails between the offices of the Department of Mines and the minister over 48 hours in early June as they discussed how to hose down the story and offer “bland” replies despite “very detailed” media inquiries.

At the time, The West was seeking responses in relation to exclusive reports into allegations over sexual assaults at BHP and Fortescue mine sites.

...

On June 10, Mr Johnston’s media adviser ... asks the department’s principal communications officer Mark Richardson if the newspaper had been in touch requesting the number of alleged sexual assault and harassment incidents at WA mines.

She also tells Mr Richardson the minister “will probably reply along the lines” of three short sentences.

Mr Richardson reveals that The West had been in touch and said, “I imagine we will provide a generic response ... I’ll loop you in”. Later in the day, he informed the department’s director of Mines Safety Andrew Chaplyn that the “Min’s Office wants to approve anything we send”.

The department had to run everything through the minister’s office —

At 4.22pm, Mr Richardson drafted a four-sentence reply to The West’s questions that he told Ms Kakulas was “bland but ‘factual’”. Despite this, at 5.40pm Mr Richardson emailed The West and said “FYI—we’re not actually working on your response with the minister’s office per se”.

This is shocking. The minister’s office is actually trying to ensure that this situation, which is so outrageous, is not being addressed properly. Another part of the article about Mr Chaplyn states —

An email he sent later that day at 2.01pm refers to how the minister’s office told the department to “scrap yesterday’s media response”. An email at 2.10pm also reveals how not everyone was happy with avoiding questions. “I am not sure that avoiding answering the last question is an ideal approach but as I advised the MO (Minister’s Office) last night I am happy to be guided by them as the media experts,” the department’s deputy director-general of the Safety Regulation Group ... wrote to Mr Richardson.

We know that the department had information. The article further states —

Official Department of Mines figures revealed alleged mine rapes across the industry have more than trebled so far this year.

The department knew of this terrible situation and instead of concentrating on fixing it, it ensured that the spin was right and that the right messages were going out from not only the minister, but also the department. The minister’s office had direct oversight of what the department was putting to the press. If that was not bad enough, when this report was tabled in this house, after all the discussion that had gone into it, and many brave people came forward to outline their situation—can I have an extension? That time went very quickly.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mr R.S. LOVE: Members of this house made contributions and some committee members came forward to relate their experiences. One would have thought that a minister who was in touch with the industry and with the situation would have made the effort to be here. He is here now so perhaps he can explain why he was not here then. I know that we do not often refer to people not being here, but that was such a momentous report that had such huge public interest, to actually not be here showed a lack of interest. That is deplorable.

The minister has since commented that it is up to the industry to solve this problem. Yes, I agree. It may be up to the industry. I have actually commented in the *Kalgoorlie Miner*, and it has also been reported in *The West Australian*, on how people go to the Diggers and Dealers Mining Forum to hear others talk about all the problems that they have had with ensuring a better culture in their workforce and making sure that everybody knows that it is not okay to treat women poorly, and those same people then go out at night and spend their money and time at the bars crowding around skimpy waitresses. I do not think that that is a good look for senior managers and investors who attend an event such as that. That is 1980s behaviour and we should be moving on from that sort of thing. Since then we have seen further reports from the deputy editor of the *Kalgoorlie Miner* about conduct towards her at one of those events. I think that shows that, yes, it is the industry’s issue, in a sense, but also that it is incredibly important to have a strong regulator, whether it be WorkSafe or the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety. Whoever that regulator is, it is incredibly important that the regulator does its job properly, because safety and a culture of safety is so important. I think the member for Vasse spoke about this at an event and the Leader of the Opposition mentioned this in her speech today about when the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Kate Jenkins, was there. They outlined how incredibly important it is for the regulator to be an agent of change in the industry to make sure that this happens. But what we have here is a minister who did not show up for the tabling of the report, he put it all back on the industry in his comments since, and he did not make a commitment to make sure that his department understands that this is a very important issue. He has, in fact, failed to grasp just how incredibly important this situation is and how it needs to be addressed. I think that is a great failing.

We might talk about other issues to do with the minister. I know there have been situations in his other portfolios. The member for Cottesloe said that perhaps the minister has too many portfolios. Perhaps that is the case. He is busily working away here at the moment. Perhaps he needs less responsibility. I think it is indicative of the situation in cabinet. What we are saying is that the cabinet of this government is getting tired and it is getting to the point at which it needs renewal and refreshment. It has ministers who have been there for a good length of time either in this government or in previous governments. They have had long ministerial careers, but they are coming to an end. It is time that some of the younger, more energetic, fresher members of this Parliament were given the opportunity to come

Ms Mia Davies; Dr David Honey; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr David Templeman; Mr Shane Love; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Bill Johnston

forward. Every organisation needs to have renewal and a succession plan. I think that this government needs to put in place its renewal and succession plan for its tired and worn-out ministers who clearly are not up to the job anymore.

MS S.F. McGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Women’s Interests) [6.22 pm]: I want to address some of the issues raised by the opposition. Many of them require a response, but I will start with the comments the member for Moore just made. Some of the things that he has raised are pretty staggering; in particular, talking about the responsibility that anyone in the mining industry has to call out bad behaviour. I am not sure whether I misunderstood that the member had been at the Diggers and Dealers Mining Forum and had presented there.

Mr R.S. Love: No, I made a comment to the *Kalgoorlie Miner*.

Ms S.F. McGURK: Thank you. He made a comment to the *Kalgoorlie Miner* that he thought it was important for the leaders in the industry to call out bad behaviour. I think it was a very poor choice of words to say that it was a “bad look” for people in the industry to be talking about safety while the conference was in session but then after hours to be socialising at or going to bars that have skimpiers and the like. Of course, a terrible incident happened with a journalist that has been well reported in *The West Australian*. The member is saying it is a bad look. That is a pretty poor use of words, member. It is actually not a bad look; it is actually very, very bad performance and very, very bad behaviour.

Ms M.J. Davies: Read the article.

Ms S.F. McGURK: Those are the words that he used, member. That is what I heard. I heard him say that it was a bad look. In fact, it is more than a bad look; it actually reflects very, very poor attitudes and very, very poor behaviour by anyone participating in those sorts of after-hours activities, including the sexual harassment of a journalist. In fact, it goes a bit deeper than that because the National Party—in this case it was a National Party member who was talking about poor behaviour—is in partnership, as a party that he represents, with the Liberal Party. That party comprises members of “The Clan”, who we know have very, very poor attitudes to women. That has been demonstrated a number of times in the report that has been discussed at length in this chamber. Women in the Liberal Party were described as sandwich makers. Just yesterday in the chamber we were reminded of the numerous examples of the sexist attitudes by members of “The Clan”, the members of which are the people who are running the Liberal Party at the moment. Yes, leaders in the mining industry need to call out bad behaviour in the workplace during working hours and also after hours, in this instance at the Diggers and Dealers conference, but we all have to look in our own backyard. Members of the National Party who are in partnership with members of the Liberal Party also need to look at their own behaviour in terms of sexist and out-of-date attitudes.

Ms C.M. Rowe: Goiran would have been frogmarched out of any other workplace.

Ms S.F. McGURK: That is right.

I want to refer to a couple of very practical improvements that this government is working on now. As the Minister for Women’s Interests, I am working in close partnership with the Minister for Industrial Relations on some of the recommendations from the *Respect@Work* report and also on some of the initiatives such as the mental awareness, respect and safety program. We have provided \$8.4 million to implement that program. It will ensure that the regulator, through WorkSafe and the department, will understand how it can work with the industry—in this case the mining industry—to better change the behaviours and attitudes that lead to poor behaviour such as sexual harassment or worse, by which I mean sexual assault and some of the criminal behaviours that we have seen revealed partly through the parliamentary committee and partly through reporting in *The West Australian* and other places. The government has provided \$8.4 million through the MARS program, which will start to look at behavioural change in the industry and also at how the regulator can work with the industry to make some of those improvements. As a government, we have committed to implement all the *Respect@Work* recommendations that apply to Western Australia. I met with Kate Jenkins recently in my office to talk through those issues. I have known Ms Jenkins, the commissioner, for a number of years, and I worked with her in the lead-up to the *Respect@Work* report. I met with her, as did the Premier, to discuss some of those issues as she was writing that report. We are working on their implementation and will report on those publicly. I also had an opportunity to meet Ms Jenkins at a Rio Tinto site not long ago. I will continue to work with my cabinet colleagues, whether it is in mining, industrial relations or other portfolios that interact with many of the issues that have arisen in the *Respect@Work* report. We know that once the thread has been pulled and we start to uncover bad behaviour in industries when it comes to sexual harassment, sexual assault and sexism, often many women come forward and talk about their experiences. We have seen the mining industry in particular come under the spotlight, as it should, because the industry makes a lot of money out of our state, it is a big employer and it is a corporate leader in our state and nationally. It should be held to a very high standard, but it is sadly not the only industry in which there is sexual harassment and sexual assault, and certainly not the only industry in which sexism is present. There is a lot of work to do, and, as government, we have been committed to doing that.

Ms Mia Davies; Dr David Honey; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr David Templeman; Mr Shane Love; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Bill Johnston

One of the themes I picked up on today in question time is that it gets a little frustrating hearing these very shallow calls from the opposition saying that as a government, we are tired and we need refreshment, when we look across the chamber and see who is calling for that—the member for Cottesloe, the member for Moore and others.

Dr D.J. Honey: What are you saying?

Ms S.F. McGURK: I am saying, actually, member —

Dr D.J. Honey: It's very explicit!

Ms S.F. McGURK: I will be explicit, member for Cottesloe. When it comes to the preselection for your seat, when there were many opportunities for renewal for the Liberal Party —

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Liberal Party!

Ms S.F. McGURK: The Liberal Party did not go for renewal.

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Liberal Party!

Dr D.J. Honey: Come on—what are you saying?

Ms S.F. McGURK: If you would stop interrupting, I will answer your question. When the Liberal Party had an opportunity for renewal, to have more women —

Dr D.J. Honey: What's the problem? Come on. Get on with it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Liberal Party!

Ms S.F. McGURK: If you would stop interrupting, member, I will answer the question!

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Just wait, minister.

Leader of the Liberal Party, you have had your say. It is now the government's turn to respond to some of the comments you made previously. You may not like what you are hearing, but the government has the right to say it, and the minister has the right to respond.

Ms S.F. McGURK: Just let the record show that one of the difficulties I am having in answering the question is that the member for Cottesloe continues to interrupt, continues to speak over me and continues to assume what I am going to say. What I am going to say is that the member for Cottesloe's party had an opportunity for renewal when it came to having more women amongst its ranks and some diversity in its ranks, but no. It chose someone who is very typical of Liberal Party members, particularly in the federal Liberal Party representation, as well as in the state.

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Liberal Party!

Ms S.F. McGURK: It is true that by shrinking the number of Liberal Party members in the lower house to two, it has finally achieved gender diversity, but it is a hell of a way to do it. You absolutely need to look at these issues as a party, and if you do not know that, you have not been paying attention in the last six months.

Dr D.J. Honey: You're about stereotypes.

Ms C.M. Rowe: It's about equality, actually.

Ms S.F. McGURK: It is actually about gender equality, member. That is the point I am making. To hear from the other side that we need to look at renewal and refreshment is just so frustrating when I look at the achievements that we have made and we have put in place as a government over the last five and a half years. Members opposite are calling for resignations from our side, when the only resignations that we have seen have been on their side. There have been two resignations, one due to child sex abuse allegations and charges that have been made—that is one of the resignations—and the other from the member for North West Central, who went to the last election 18 months ago and asked to be elected for the next four years. What did he say when he decided to go now? He said, "I have teenage children and I want to spend more time with my family." As the Minister for Education and Training; Leader of the Government in the other place said, I think the member for North West Central knew the ages of his children and how many there were when he went to the election last March. It is ridiculous to say that he has now decided that he cannot handle the job and needs to spend more time with his family. It is ridiculous. When the going gets tough, he decided to quit, just like he has done before. On this side, when we have work to do, we stick at it.

Ms Mia Davies; Dr David Honey; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr David Templeman; Mr Shane Love; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Bill Johnston

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

Ms M.J. Davies: It's reflections on people's families. It's disgraceful.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition!

Ms S.F. McGURK: Just so we are clear, the Leader of the Opposition is saying that I am making a poor reflection on the member's family. I never made any reflection at all on the member's family. I was talking about the reason that he resigned from Parliament. He ran for election 18 months ago and committed to stand for another four years; 18 months later, when the going gets tough, he pulls out.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members! Leader of the Opposition!

Ms S.F. McGURK: On this side of the chamber, when we have work to do, we get on with it. We do the hard work of being in government and committing to good policies.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Deputy Leader of the Opposition!

Ms S.F. McGURK: We did not interject when the member was speaking. We did not interject at all.

We have work to do as a government, we have work to do as government ministers, and we are getting on with it. There is an incredible list of achievements that we are very proud of. But if we again just focus on the opposition, what have members opposite done? What proposals are they putting up to address the issues that they talk about? For instance, members opposite have raised youth justice a number of times. What actual policy proposals and initiatives are they putting up and saying will make a material difference to the issues? They are difficult issues; there is no doubt at all about that. These are difficult issues that have been generations in the making and were there for the eight and a half years when members opposite were in office. In fact, when we think about initiatives, innovations and improvements, if people can think of any improvements in any of those areas—in my portfolio areas, for instance—I would be pleased to hear about any improvements that were put in place while they were in office, because I cannot think of any. I cannot think of any improvements to policy or any policy initiatives for the eight and a half years that members opposite were in government or since they have been in opposition. I really would like to hear some detail around that, because I cannot think of any and cannot see any.

In fact, the only thing I see from the opposition is when I read *The West* in the morning and get an idea about what their questions will be about in here. All of a sudden, the theme is that we are going to call on ministers to resign—an issue that has been taken up in *The West Australian*. That is their theme. That is their parliamentary tactic once they come in here. The member for Moore talked about the Minister for Industrial Relations' response to the allegations of sexual assault and the words that were used in response to a media query. It happens every single day in the minister's office. It has happened for the last five and a half years; it happened in spades for the eight and a half years that members opposite were in office. It happens in every single government that there is discussion about how a minister will respond to a media query. Quite apart from these questions, all opposition members do is read *The West* and then get up, and that is what they are armed with. They have nothing else—absolutely nothing else.

I refer to my portfolio. The Leader of the Opposition said that the Department of Communities is clearly dysfunctional, and the opposition has repeatedly called the Department of Communities a mega-department. How is it clearly dysfunctional, member? There are hundreds and hundreds of child protection workers around this state doing incredibly challenging and difficult engagement with families, actually having some really good wins at times—not always, because it is really, really hard work, and, by their nature, those families coming before the department are in crisis. Their situations are often many years in the making. But when those workers fail, when they have difficulties, she calls them dysfunctional. I notice the Leader of the Opposition is not looking up; her eyes are staying glued to her computer, because she does not want to deal with those issues, when she blames child protection workers in our state and their department for being dysfunctional. She cannot have it both ways. She cannot say that the Department of Communities is dysfunctional, yet applaud the work of child protection workers. She cannot have it both ways. I acknowledge that there is difficult work there, and sometimes we do not get it right, but that is the nature of child protection work. It is high-risk work.

When we were at the Achiever Awards and I saw the reduction in the number of Aboriginal children in care for the first time in 25 years—a small but significant and definite trend—I was very proud of that. I am proud of the policies that we have put in place as a government. I am proud of working with the Department of Communities and the child protection workforce, which, as I said, are doing difficult work. There are pressures at the moment. There is no doubt about that. There are staffing pressures because of COVID impacting the state, including through

Ms Mia Davies; Dr David Honey; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr David Templeman; Mr Shane Love; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Bill Johnston

the border closures. We are not the only industry to have those pressures. The Department of Communities and the social services workforce are not the only workforce or industry to suffer those staffing pressures. We acknowledge that, but we are working hard to overcome them. We are putting in more staff.

We have put in more than 224 new full-time equivalent positions for case-carrying child protection staff since coming to office. In the opposition's last term, over four years, it put in 13 new FTEs. We have been in for five and a half years and we have brought in 224 case-carrying child protection staff. I am really proud of that. I am proud of the government for putting more money into early intervention so that Aboriginal community-controlled organisations can work with vulnerable families and start to address the issues that have brought them before the child protection system. That is where we are starting to see inroads into better engagement with those services and more contracts to Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and, as a result, fewer children in the child protection system. But if children are unsafe and we need to bring them into care, that is what we will do.

I ask opposition members to just once back those staff and thank them for their work and acknowledge that it is difficult work, instead of always going for the crisis, being ambulance chasers, being hysterical and being lazy. All opposition members do is read *The West* and come here, and that is their strategy. It is really quite tragic.

I could talk about a number of other things, such as the additional money that we have put into my portfolios, particularly child protection, and the feeder issues that bring families before the child protection system, particularly around family and domestic violence. There is a huge focus on and a huge increase in investment, with \$150 million of new spending. There is massive law reform and cooperation happening across portfolios, which the opposition could only have dreamt of. What was happening in cabinet when it was in government was incredibly divisive. There was absolutely no cooperation across portfolios at all. In fact, the then Minister for Transport, Dean Nalder, eventually resigned from cabinet because he said that he was continually getting undermined by the Premier's department.

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Mines and Petroleum) [6.42 pm]: I want to answer a few things. Normally, when opposition members come in here, they do not make specific allegations, but today they made a couple and a number of those relate to me. Therefore, it is only appropriate that I get the opportunity to answer those specific allegations because it is an unusual event. Normally, they do not make specific allegations.

Firstly, I want to address the question raised by the member for Moore about some emails between public servants regarding a media response from a year ago. It is almost a year to the day since that news article appeared in the paper and this is the first occasion on which anybody has ever raised it with me. Therefore, this is the first occasion on which I have been able to respond to that allegation. I make the point that I have never refused an interview on the question of sexual harassment in the mining industry, and I have been quoted in the media dozens of times because I have done press conference after press conference. I have made myself available to media interviews. Even at the time, a year and bit ago, when Caitlyn Rintoul started this excellent work that led to her getting a Walkley Award, the day after the first article was written, I did a press conference in Cockburn at the so-called South Fremantle power station, where Caitlyn Rintoul asked me questions. To make it clear, I have never not made myself available for interview.

Today the opposition referred to an email from a public servant to another public servant that was cc-ed to an officer in my office. It was nothing to do with me. I did not know anything of that email until after it was published in *The West Australian*. The idea that somehow it had anything to do with me is a false position. It never had anything to do with me. The member says, "Oh, you were trying to manage the media performance of the department." Of course. We all do that, but I was not managing the media performance of the regulator. The regulator at that time in health and safety was Andrew Chaplyn, who is the chief inspector of mines. I never once suggested to him how he should respond to the media. I did not want the department to give itself false bravado in the media, as if it were on top of the issue, because clearly the reason this young journalist, who did a splendid job in exposing something no-one knew anything about, raised this issue was that she had information that was not available to the department. I certainly did not want the department to come out and say that it was doing a good job, because clearly that was not the case. If it had been doing a good job, we would have known about the issues that Caitlyn Rintoul was reporting on.

Of course, I told the department not to crow in the media about its performance because that would have been disgraceful. Of course, I told the department to report only the statistics and other information that it had available. Whatever the stats were was no business of mine, but I wanted it to stick only to the facts. I did not want it to defend its performance in the media. Again I say that I never once told any regulator how it should respond to a media inquiry—never. Regulators are independent of government. Ministers do not control the activities of regulators. Regulators make those decisions. If the opposition wants, I am happy to table in Parliament my communications agreement with the Parliament, which makes it clear that I do not have the right to tell a regulator what to do. I have nothing to hide in these matters because I have exercised my responsibilities to a high standard. What is my responsibility? My responsibility is to work with the regulators to make sure that they have the resourcing they

Ms Mia Davies; Dr David Honey; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr David Templeman; Mr Shane Love; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Bill Johnston

need, and the mines safety inspectorate is the best resourced safety regulator in Australia. I need to make sure that it has the legislation it needs to enforce the rights that we want.

Guess what? I delivered the work health and safety legislation against the vote of the Liberal Party. I acknowledge that the Nationals WA supported the legislation and we would not have industrial manslaughter as an offence in Western Australia if it was not for the work of the National Party in support of the government. I always acknowledged the National Party was a key part of introducing the offence of industrial manslaughter when it supported the government in that matter. It is something that the trade union movement is proud of, because we have worked for so long to get it in.

I am trying to do my bit. I am not the regulator. I understand the purpose of some of the recommendations of the inquiry and we will respond to them, but some of them ask the Minister for Mines and Petroleum to take action when it is about legislation covered by the Minister for Industrial Relations. I am not going to split hairs on a badly worded recommendation, because I understand what it is trying to achieve. But members should not come in here crying about things that they have shown no interest in at any time in their career.

I am not going to personalise it, but do not forget that the Liberal Party elected Troy Buswell as its leader after he had sniffed that woman's chair and after he had undone clothing on a Labor staffer in the Speaker's personal chambers. That was after the Liberal Party knew that. Liberal Party members come in here to lecture me about sexual harassment. The Liberal Party elected a serial sex pest as the Leader of the Liberal Party and then it defended him for years. When we tried to hold him to account after he got drunk and crashed his car eight times in Subiaco, Liberal Party members said, "Oh, you are impacting his mental health." Do not lecture me. One of the things I am proud of is my time at the Shop Assistants Union. Young women used to come to me and tell me about problems they were having with being harassed by pests in the workplace. I have never experienced it; I do not know what it is like to be a victim of sexual harassment, but I have worked with women who have been victims and I will always work on the side of victims.

I could be politicising this to no end. Until tonight, I have never publicly pointed out the hypocrisy of the Liberal Party. When I was the Minister for Commerce, I personally introduced legislation in this chamber to give women escaping domestic violence additional rights. Except for the current member for Cottesloe, who was not in the Parliament, the rest of you voted against the legislation. You all voted against it. Do not come in here and try to personalise this stuff. As the Bible says, let him who is without sin cast the first stone. I am not suggesting that the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety has got stuff entirely right in its handling of sexual harassment matters. It needs to be held to account for anything it has done wrong. I will not be lectured to by a group of people who supported a serial sex pest to become the leader of their party. The Leader of the Opposition was leading both the National Party and the Liberal Party at that time. They celebrated their belief that he was some great person who should lead them. He was their Treasurer and their chief attack dog in the Parliament. They did not find out about his sexual harassment behaviour after he did that. That happened before they gave him those jobs.

I am sorry but I do not remember the name of the journalist, the deputy editor of the *Kalgoorlie Miner*. We talked on the sideline in the media area at the Diggers and Dealers Mining Forum. She seemed to be an impressive young person. I am deeply saddened that she was treated that way by people who attended Diggers and Dealers. It shows that Diggers and Dealers needs to step up. It is the principal mining conference in Western Australia. If it is going to continue to hold itself up in Kalgoorlie, it will have to pick itself up. Many people are lobbying to move Diggers and Dealers to Perth because of the accommodation issues. I support it staying in Kalgoorlie because Kalgoorlie is the golden heart of Western Australia's mining industry. It would be disappointing to have it leave the goldfields. It will stay in Kalgoorlie only if these issues are resolved, not some time in the future. We can never have this situation occur at Diggers and Dealers again. If there is sexual harassment and predatory behaviour by delegates at the conference, it will not last in Kalgoorlie; it will end up in Perth. If the people of Kalgoorlie want to keep Diggers and Dealers—I believe that is the best place for it, despite the accommodation challenges—they need to improve, and they need to do it immediately. I raised the question of sexual harassment and culture in my presentation at the dinner. I have spoken at the dinner five times. It was only the second time I got spontaneous applause. The first time was when I reported that eight mineworkers had been rescued from an underground fire half an hour before the dinner started and the second time was this year when I said it was time for culture change in the industry.

Somehow I am being blamed for saying that the industry needs to improve. I suggest that members read the Rio Tinto report. The Rio Tinto report does not make a single recommendation about law reform. It says that Rio Tinto will drive out sexual harassment and predatory behaviour if Rio Tinto changes. That is the whole point. The law has been clear in Western Australia since the 1980s. The Equal Opportunity Act was enacted in 1984. I have talked about this previously. The 1991 Clough Joint Venture v McIntosh decision made it clear. At that time there was a \$142 000 reward. In 1991, \$142 000 was a lot of money. It would have bought someone more than a house. It was a huge decision at the time. The idea that employers do not know that they are responsible for sexual harassment is a ridiculous argument. The fact that companies have been making secret payments to women who brought forward

Ms Mia Davies; Dr David Honey; Mr Peter Rundle; Acting Speaker; Mr David Templeman; Mr Shane Love; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Bill Johnston

complaints shows that they knew it was their job. The fact that they did it and did not report it to the Equal Opportunity Commission, the mines safety inspectorate, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, the Fair Work Ombudsman, their shareholders or anybody else showed that they knew that they were doing the wrong thing, yet they never did it publicly. When I would ask the regulator to tell me the stats, the stats were quite low. Clearly, those stats were wrong.

I wish to make another comment. The problems in the FIFO industry are appalling and we need to fix them. One way we are going to fix them is by increasing the number of women in the sector. Quotas will work. I suggest that the opposition get on board with quotas. Let us look at the Labor Party. When I joined the Labor Party back in 1983, it was a completely different organisation from the one it is now, and that is because we changed our culture. The introduction of quotas was an important component of the change of culture in the Labor Party. It is unrecognisable now. Next year it will be 40 years since I joined the Labor Party. I can tell members that it is a different beast now from what it was 40 years ago. We have our own sins to atone for, but at least we have changed our culture, and the mining industry needs to accept that. The next industry that needs to accept that is the agriculture industry. Let us have a look at what is happening in agriculture. There are plenty of reports of farmers around Australia demanding sexual services from backpackers in return for getting them an extended visa. That is appalling. I have been desperate for the federal government to take action, and now we have a federal government that might do so.

In the hospitality industry, four men are currently in court charged with raping their staff members. The idea that this is a problem only for the FIFO industry is not correct. Of course there is a huge problem in FIFO, and it is particularly severe because women have to live on site, but that is a question for FIFO.

I was once asked why the mental health code of practice in FIFO workplaces deals with sexual harassment. It is because there was a parliamentary report that told us we needed to introduce that code. It was not given to me as the minister; it was given to the former government. When we came to government, there had been no response to that inquiry. When I came to office, one of my first actions was to demand that the code of practice be developed, and it dealt with the issues that the Jacobs inquiry had recommended we look at. Now we have a new report from this new committee and we are responding to that. It is hardly a surprise that we respond to data when people provide data to us. That is why the WorkSafe Western Australia Commissioner is looking at farm deaths in the agriculture industry. Three-quarters of workplace deaths in Western Australia are in the agriculture industry, which is a fraction of a per cent of the total workforce. We operate on data. I get back to the fact that the government did not have the data available to it before Caitlyn Rintoul's great work; it was all being hidden by companies through their confidential agreements. I am happy to be held accountable for the work that I do; I have no trouble with that at all.

I could go on for a long time on that, but I have only a couple of minutes before the Parliament rises. I want to address corrective services. By the way, the power station in Kalgoorlie is turned on by a guy with a laptop and he can sit anywhere in the world, so what does it matter? It is such a stupid comment. It is so ridiculous. They have technicians up there who repair it. The member for Cottesloe knows that. He visited the facility and he does not understand anything that he learnt. This is the problem. Every time we give the member a briefing, he knows nothing.

Anyway, let us get onto the prisons. Prisons are difficult to manage. I am very proud of the work done by the prison officers. I know that I am in a dispute with the WA Prison Officers' Union; I get that and I have sought legal advice. I am not able to explain exactly why we are in dispute, but the point I would make is that the criticism from the union started about three or four weeks ago. I cannot tell members what I did three or four weeks ago because I have sought legal advice from the State Solicitor and I was told I am not allowed to talk about it. When it becomes public, people will understand what is driving the Prison Officers' Union. I am proud of the work done by the prison officers, and I want to assure them that I am on their side to provide a safe environment. The number one cause of workers' compensation claims by prison officers is being injured by a prisoner. That has to be dealt with by the department. The department has not been properly concentrating on that in the past, but it is now. We will continue to work with prison officers to improve the situation in the prisons. They are in a dangerous environment, and we have to improve it. But glib one-liners are never going to change anything.

I am proud of the work that I am doing on behalf of the people of this state to provide a safe environment for the workers in the prisons, for the prisoners and for the community, keeping the prisoners inside the prisons, but I also want to do it efficiently. We have to do it efficiently. We cannot have a situation in which money is no object. Money is an object. We have to be accountable for the expenditure in the prison service. This is a very difficult environment, and I am proud the Premier trusts me with such great responsibility.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

House adjourned at 7.00 pm
