

APPROPRIATION (RECURRENT 2023–24) BILL 2023
APPROPRIATION (CAPITAL 2023–24) BILL 2023

Second Reading — Cognate Debate

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MS M.J. HAMMAT (Mirrabooka — Parliamentary Secretary) [2.52 pm]: I am very happy to have the opportunity to continue my comments on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2023–24) Bill 2023 and the Appropriation (Capital 2023–24) Bill 2023. I will pick up from where I left off before we started question time. I want to make a few comments about our significant investment into schools and education.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, can you move around more quietly, please? That would be appreciated. Carry on, member.

Ms M.J. HAMMAT: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

I am very proud to be part of a government that is delivering \$965 million for education and training initiatives as part of this budget. We are partly delivering better infrastructure, but we are also delivering better supports, particularly for students with disability. I have spoken before in this place about the many excellent schools that we have in the electorate of Mirrabooka, and, in fact, there are many excellent schools around the state. They are doing very important work to ensure that our young people get the skills and training they need so that they are well equipped for good jobs and good futures. Our public schools offer the opportunity for young people to transform their lives. They are particularly important for people in my electorate, many of whom come from migrant or refugee backgrounds. I am really delighted that this budget continues the important work of investing in our local schools.

I am very excited about the performing arts centre and STEM laboratory to be built at Balga Senior High School. I know that the whole school community and, in fact, the whole community in Balga are very much looking forward to this new building. It will be a great community resource and provide a fantastic boost for what is already a good local school. I have spoken before in this place about some of the great work that Balga Senior High School is doing, particularly in the performing arts space. I have spoken before about the Proud Noongar Boys who were recognised in the Triple J Unearthed High Indigenous Initiative competition for their track based on last year's NAIDOC theme.

Now Sounds, a new hip-hop collaboration, recently released a song called *Your Way*. The song and video clip have been produced collaboratively between students from Balga Senior High School, Sevenoaks Senior College in Cannington and the Kununurra Police and Community Youth Centre. It is a creative development that spans 3 000 kilometres of the state. It was worked on collaboratively by students from First Nations and multicultural backgrounds. I encourage people to go online and watch it. The scale of the collaboration is significant. It brought together not only students from those three areas, finding a way for them to collaborate with legitimate hip-hop artists in Perth, but also six rappers, 70 to 80 singers, three drummers, a bass player, three guitarists, two keyboardists, five Ableton producers, 40 djembe players, 50 percussionists and one whistle flautist. It is a really fantastic collaboration and a demonstration of the sort of work going on in our schools. I cannot wait to see the performing arts centre take shape at Balga. I know that it will provide further opportunities for the school and its students to find different ways to create, perform and produce some innovative and creative art.

While I am talking about some of the schools in the electorate of Mirrabooka, I already mentioned the students from John Septimus Roe Anglican Community School who were here in the gallery earlier and those who will be visiting Parliament over the next couple of days. I also want to give a shout-out to Warriapendi Primary School in Balga. The year 5 students from Warriapendi will be shortly visiting Parliament and undertaking one of the school tours run by the Parliamentary Education Office. Unfortunately, I will not be able to join them on the day. I am always very excited when students from my electorate take the time to visit Parliament House, so I am really disappointed that I will not be able to join them on that occasion, but I want to take this opportunity to give a shout-out to those year 5s from Warriapendi and their teachers who will be accompanying them on the day, Rebecca Rick and Diane Stewart. I want to say to them, as I say to all the students who visit Parliament House, how good it is that they come and have a look at our state Parliament. Like so many things, our democracy works best when people actively participate in it. Although those students are not yet old enough to vote, our democracy will be shaped by people who take an interest in the issues before the Parliament and the issues shaping our society. It works best when elected representatives like me take the time to listen to and understand the issues facing the people whom they represent, and I take that responsibility very seriously. Just like our democracy is for everyone, our Parliament House should be for everyone, too. Visiting Parliament House is a great way to learn about our democracy and get motivated to participate in it. It is a great way to learn about not just how laws are made, but also the history of this great state, the history of white settlement and the history of our Aboriginal people. I hope that the students from Warriapendi Primary School get a lot of value out of their visit to this Parliament and I encourage them to aspire to represent their communities in this Parliament as they grow up, no matter who they are or where they come from.

I am so proud to be part of a government that includes record numbers of women migrants and refugees. I encourage everyone to take an active interest in community events and aspire to be a representative in this Parliament.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms M.J. HAMMAT: I also wanted to make a few comments about community sport and recreation facilities throughout Western Australia because they will benefit from increased funding for upgrades, with an additional \$7.5 million a year over the next two years being funded in this state budget. The increase in funding means that the community sporting and recreation facilities fund will increase to \$20 million for the 2023–24 and 2024–25 financial years, up from \$12.5 million a year. One thing this funding is important for is ensuring that we can upgrade sporting facilities. Among other things, funding is available to improve sports floodlighting through the Club Night Lights program. I am very pleased that \$22.5 million in combined funding will be available per annum through the CSRFF and Club Night Lights program for the next two years. Sport, recreation and community activities are really important for delivering important social, health and economic benefits to local communities.

I know this uplift in funding is of interest to the Balga Soccer Club, particularly to club president Ken Shorto, its committee and its players. The Balga Soccer Club celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 2021, making the club about as old as the suburb itself. The club plays at Princess Wallington Reserve in Balga, and it has aspired for many years to upgrade the lighting at its playing fields so it can extend the training time into the evening hours. This is becoming particularly pressing as the number of women and girls playing soccer has grown in recent years. We all expect that number is likely to continue to grow as the FIFA Women's World Cup comes to Perth in July.

Mr D.A. Templeman: I met your Balga junior footballers—brilliant young women.

Ms M.J. HAMMAT: I am coming to that. They are great young women, indeed.

The club offers junior players the opportunity to play soccer fee free. That is available because parents do not have to pay club fees, which can be prohibitively expensive for soccer, but in return, the club expects parents to do a certain number of volunteer hours. It has been incredibly successful in building active parent participation and in attracting significant sponsorships. I am very proud to be one of its sponsors and supporters. It is a terrific local club that reflects the multicultural nature of the community I represent. It recently launched a small book called *Together*, which provides profiles of some of the players, coaches and club members. Last week, I was very happy to provide a copy of the book to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. I think it is a really beautiful book that profiles much about the people who are the heart of the community club.

What the club really wants and needs is funding for night lights so more players can play and the club can continue to grow, particularly its women's and girls' teams, which are already having great success. As a community-based club, it is already doing a lot of heavy lifting to make soccer affordable and accessible for people in my community, but it does not have additional funds that it can contribute towards the installation of lights. To do that upgrade, it needs the owners of its home ground, the City of Stirling, to make an application and support the lighting upgrade. Despite my fairly active attempts since I was elected in 2021, the City of Stirling has not yet funded the lights program. I know that Ken Shorto and his club are incredibly frustrated by that. I hope that the City of Stirling will do that in the new financial year and be able to provide the club with the night lights it so desperately needs. The lack of an application from the City of Stirling has been the source of great frustration for the club. Rightly or wrongly, the club often feels that the city has prioritised other clubs in that local council authority—those outside of my electorate but perhaps in more affluent areas—to have their lighting and other upgrades provided because some of those other clubs have been able to put some money into the projects themselves and so the City of Stirling has bumped them up the priority list. Our budget announcement to increase funding for night lights has the potential to make a significant difference to the Balga Soccer Club and its players.

The book *Together* clearly profiles the kinds of people who are playing at the club. I am thinking of people like Htoo and her six-year-old son, Nathan. Htoo is a refugee from Myanmar and part of the Karen ethnic group. She spent 18 years in a refugee camp in Thailand and arrived in Australia about 11 years ago. Her six-year-old son plays at the club, and she loves to go to watch him play. She loves the friendly spirit of the club and is a regular feature there. This club allows people who have arrived here from refugee and migrant backgrounds to get their kids involved in community sport, and we would all agree about the importance of that.

I am also thinking about Ramla, who is originally from Somalia and came to Australia via a refugee camp in Kenya. She plays with the women's team, which had a very successful season last year. She also runs the club's social media and is on the board. She is keen to open the door for other Somali girls like her to play at the Balga Soccer Club.

I am keen to ensure that this increase in funding for community clubs is available to support this really great club in my community, which is opening a door for participation in community sport and needs assistance to get its lighting upgraded so it can train for longer hours on that oval. It could do so much more if it had that lighting installed.

Deputy Speaker, I am almost out of time, but I wanted to make a couple of other quick references.

Mr D.A. Templeman: I will come out and have a look at that. I am very impressed. It is an exemplar club in what it is doing in making sure that as many young people as possible can participate. It is remarkable.

Ms M.J. HAMMAT: We are planning to do that. It is a fantastic club and a great model. We will be very happy to have you, minister. That would be great.

I also wanted to make a few comments about the Naala Djookan Healing Centre in Mirrabooka, which was one of the first of its kind in the state when it was opened in December 2020. It is a wraparound hub for people who are experiencing family and domestic violence, and it is a one-stop shop so people can get a range of supports as they deal with family and domestic violence. I am very pleased that this budget commits \$13.4 million to extend funding for Naala Djookan and a similar service in Kalgoorlie until June 2027. I know from my work in the electorate office that we have referred a number of people to seek support and assistance from Naala Djookan. It is often women but not always. Naala Djookan provides essential support to people in my community, so I am thinking of them today as I deliver this speech because I know what a difference being able to have continuing access to that service will make to their lives. I am very pleased that we are opening similar hubs in Armadale and Broome.

I also want to acknowledge the significant investment in health and mental health. The uplift in funding in those areas is significant, and it is a matter that members of my community regularly underline to me as one of the important pieces of work by the state government. They rely on the state government to access health and health services. There is increasing concern about having access to appropriate mental health support, so that additional funding is significant and very welcome.

I have spoken at length before in this place about the significant upgrades happening to the Balga TAFE. That work has started, and I am very excited to see it continue. It is a significant upgrade to what is a really important training institution in my electorate and in the state. The Minister for Training today outlined how our plan is working to get young people back into training through a range of different measures to make it affordable. Having access to quality institutions for students to undertake that training is the other leg. I am so excited that this upgrade is happening in Balga, right in the middle of the Mirrabooka electorate, and will be providing access to training, job opportunities and all the great futures that come with that.

There are so many things to talk about in this budget. I can see the real impact that these initiatives are having on the people in my community and the opportunities it is creating. I want to close my comments today by once again congratulating the Premier; Treasurer and all the members of cabinet for the financial discipline and for the commitment to ensure that we have a budget that provides a safety net for the most vulnerable in our community in a whole range of ways and seeks to build the future of the state. I can see how this makes a profound difference to many of the people I represent. I have tried to talk about a few of them in my comments today. It is a great budget. I look forward to taking the Minister for Sport and Recreation to see the Balga Soccer Club. With that, I conclude my comments and commend the bills to the house.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt) [3.09 pm]: I rise to speak in reply to the McGowan Labor government's Appropriation (Recurrent 2023–24) Bill 2023 and Appropriation (Capital 2023–24) Bill 2023. In doing so, I note that it has been 10 years since I was elected member for Central Wheatbelt, and before that I was member for the Agricultural Region, which included all the communities that I now represent.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Which one? You've spent most years in this house now; is that right?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Yes. I was in the Legislative Council for only one term.

Central Wheatbelt is made up of 27 local governments, and a number of those local governments have multiple town sites and locales within their boundaries. Therefore, there are more than 27 places for me to be at any one time for my constituents to access me. I have been involved in politics long enough to remember the electorate as it was before the Carpenter Labor government introduced one vote, one value to the Legislative Assembly. The consequences of those changes increased the number of seats in the Legislative Assembly from 57 to 59; the electorates in the metropolitan area went from 34 to 42; and, in regional Western Australia, we went from 23 electorates down to 17. The electorate of Central Wheatbelt was created at that 2008 state election, and it merged the electorates of Avon in the west and Merredin in the east. With all the discussion about how fair and just one vote, one value is from those opposite—an ideological and political cover for the Labor Party—what is lost is how much more difficult it is for constituents to access their MPs on a regular basis in these very large electorates to effectively do the job. It saddens me that 10 years on from becoming their local member of Parliament, and nearly 15 years since I was elected, we are once again having to deal with the consequences of the Labor Party reducing the representation of regional people in our state Parliament. That is the Labor Party's legacy—ideology above all else.

I work hard to make sure my constituents get the best representation possible. That is my job, and I love it. But electoral reform is not about the impact on the MP; it is about the impact on constituents, voters, taxpayers, vulnerable

people, people with ideas to take the state forward and people investing their own hard-earned dollars, ultimately benefiting the state.

Seven years into this government disillusionment is setting in. Without the cover of COVID, cracks are showing. Questions that I am asked in my constituency and as I travel around the state about the Premier and the government's agenda and their behaviour are becoming more pointed. Big promises were made about housing, so how is it that we do not have housing for our most vulnerable? Big promises were made about looking after public servants, so how is it that we do not have housing for our essential workers—police, teachers and nurses? Our police are leaving in droves. Big promises were made about revitalising our energy economy, so how is it that we in the Central Wheatbelt do not have reliable power? How is it that we do not have reliable telecommunications? It is because this government does not deliver. We have a big-spending transport minister, yet how is it that the main highway into and out of the state, the Great Eastern Highway, is crumbling away, leaving us at risk every time we get in a car or behind the wheel of a truck?

My tenth anniversary as member for Central Wheatbelt has caused me to go back to the budget reply speech that I delivered in 2013. It was before I was a cabinet minister. I was newly elected to the Assembly. That election saw a very big swing to the Barnett government, and the performance of the Labor Party was not so crash hot. I say this only to point out to the many members who have enjoyed only the upside of government that they need to remember that the electorate can and will turn, and members will recognise the turn: it will be in the form of an arrogant and grumpy Premier; problems emerging in portfolios to derail the good news agenda of the government; and restless troops on the back bench with nowhere to go unless there is a changing of the guard at the top. It does start to bite. I do not say this with malice or as a threat. I am just pointing out that students of politics will know that governments get tired and grumpy and arrogant. Government members get tired of justifying and defending and answering questions when they think everybody in the electorate should just be grateful for all the hard work that they are putting in. It is just a matter of fact.

If I go back to my electorate in 2013, there was good news to be shared by our government—in stark contrast to what I have gleaned from this year's budget. The highlights in 2013–14 for the Central Wheatbelt were a massive \$300 million package for agriculture to be invested over five years; the biggest spend ever on country health into the Southern Inland Health Initiative, transforming health services and infrastructure and laying the foundation for new and improved ways of delivering health services in our region; funding to support the Central East Aged Care Alliance, which is a group of 11 wheatbelt shires, to improve affordable housing for seniors in those communities; funding to support the rural generalist pathways project—everyone has heard me talk about the Shire of Quairading having to find \$1 million to attract a doctor—to support the training of junior doctors in regional areas; increases to subsidy rates for the patient assisted travel scheme, especially for those accessing treatment for cancer, our seniors and those living with a disability; funding for the Emergency Services Volunteer Fuel Card, which was cut in half when this government came to power; and an \$8 million investment in Northam Senior High School off the back of the completion of a trade training centre the year before and a brand new Merredin Residential College in the previous four years, and that created a new multipurpose performing arts centre in Northam, which I am sure member for Mandurah has visited and understands just how magnificent it is.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Good acoustics! I couldn't help myself.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It has great acoustics; I am sure the member has tested them out.

There was \$10 million for upgrades to the accommodation and infrastructure at Muresk Institute, our pre-eminent agricultural education tertiary facility; and funding to support our local government to upgrade their swimming pools, which is essential infrastructure that is a constant and significant drain on local government finances but very necessary if you live in regional WA. There was much more, but those things specifically benefited the Central Wheatbelt. There was a buoyancy in the electorate. Communities back then understood that the pathway to royalties for regions for infrastructure, projects and services would help their communities thrive, not just survive.

In the second term of our government, we shifted from a deficit-funding model with that royalties for regions program, when we were plugging the holes from the Carpenter–Ripper–Gallop governments, to an evolving forward-looking program in which we challenged service and infrastructure delivery and partnered with the private sector, to think outside the square to deliver those perennially difficult services and infrastructure into sparsely populated areas in regional Western Australia.

I said before, Central Wheatbelt has 27 local governments with very small populations. It is 100 000 square kilometres in size, but according to the Minister for Education; Aboriginal Affairs, we are all very close to Perth. I will remember that when I am out in Southern Cross halfway to Kalgoorlie the next time I speak to my constituents. It is difficult, but not impossible if you have the will, to deliver the services and infrastructure that we deserve, such as health, aged care, child care, education and community services and educating people about changes that will ultimately benefit the whole of Western Australia, but not if we do not actually reach out and talk to the people who it will impact the most. The only real interface that the public now have with royalties for regions is through regional

economic development grants, and that is essentially what the development commissions have been tasked with. Gone is the trust that our government placed in development commissions, local governments and decision-makers who worked and lived in these areas. This government has centralised all its control and spending, and it is certainly not benefiting my electorate in the Central Wheatbelt. That is not to cast aspersions on the people in those development commissions; they are good people. But the government has not let them loose on actually delivering on its behalf.

I attended the state budget briefing presented by the Minister for Community Services; Early Childhood Education in Northam the day after the budget. Hon Sabine Winton came out to Northam, and I appreciate that the minister took time to visit the electorate, but I think she drew the short straw on where she was sent! That is not a reflection on my amazing community; she drew the short straw because there was really very little to announce. I wonder whether it was the case that if you are the newest minister, you get to go to the place where there is nothing to talk about. Perhaps that is the way it works in the McGowan government.

Mr D.A. Templeman: No; I've done Northam.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: There you go! It is an interesting Labor strategy, minister. I am sure that is what it is: it is to starve the electorates —

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: That is right, but you were not talking about the budget or anything in it, were you?

I think it is a very interesting Labor strategy, and I am sure that is what it is—to starve the electorates that the government thinks it has no stake in. However, the members for Agricultural Region—Hon Darren West, Hon Shelley Payne and Hon Sandra Carr—are all government representatives for this electorate. I understand when the Premier says to ignore the local MP if they are from the opposition, but in the same breath, he throws his own members under the bus—and people know. These MPs have to have awkward conversations about live export, access to power, telecommunications, water charges, housing and the lack of investment they see in the wheatbelt from the Department of Housing. They are clearly failing to make the case in their own caucus. These MPs claim they have the ear of the Premier and government ministers but, if they do, it is falling on deaf ears. Either way, the electorate knows that Labor is no friend of regional Western Australia or their communities.

What should have been in the budget for the Central Wheatbelt? I am starting with power. I will have another go at this tomorrow when I do a grievance. We need a commitment to support the transition for our edge-of-grid communities like Beacon, Bencubbin, Mukinbudin and Quairading to help those with regular brownouts and blackouts get more reliable services. The minister continues to make promises and made a big show of going out to Quairading and working with King Rocks. Nothing has changed. An investment in turbocharging Western Power's capacity to connect new projects to power is exactly what we need to see, which is what I will raise tomorrow with the minister. The member for Vasse was quite right; we will keep asking these questions because I have history with this minister. He says one thing and then he does not follow up and does not deliver.

I welcome the commitment for additional funds for Government Regional Officers' Housing and social housing, but the question is where these houses will land. I am happy to be corrected by the minister, but as far as I am aware not one extra social or GROH house has been delivered in the electorate of Central Wheatbelt. I want to give members some examples of why this challenge presents so much of a problem for my constituents who are desperate to see these social houses built or purchased in the electorate. I will not give members their names because it would unfairly disclose their private information, but I can tell members that there is a couple who both work. They are 58 and 62 years old. They have been renting since 2017 with the same landlord; however, the house has now been sold and they will be homeless as of 17 June. They are not eligible for Department of Communities' housing as they earn too much and there are no rentals in Northam. They cannot move in with family in Northam as there is no room. She works as a cleaner at a primary school and he works for a shire, not necessarily in Northam. A neighbouring town has a one-bedroom unit; however, it has asbestos and they are not comfortable living there.

Another gentleman came into my office. He is currently living in his car. He was told that the Department of Communities housing waitlist would be five years and he cannot access a private rental. A 69-year-old male sold his house due to issues with his neighbour. He lost money on the sale and has no money to buy a house. There is not one to buy and he is currently couch surfing. He said to me that he will not put himself on the waitlist, even though we have urged him to do so, because he says he will be dead within five years and that is how long he was told the waitlist was. There is a male with his wife and his wife's carer in their late 60s. Their rental was condemned. There is no housing available with the Department of Communities and they cannot access the private rental market. Both of them are diabetic and the husband has a heart condition. They have nowhere to store their furnishings, so they have sold what they can and they are currently couch surfing. I also have a single mum who has escaped domestic violence with three young kids. Her partner is in the south west. She has been forced to move back to somewhere in my electorate because otherwise she would be in breach of a Family Court order. She needs to be close to where

her ex-partner is, despite what she has been through. She is desperate to get back to stable housing for the kids so they can have their father in their lives and so she is not breaching Family Court orders. She cannot do that. We have helped her to get on the priority list. I was devastated when she sent me a message saying, “I’m so grateful for your help. They’ve told me I might have a house in two years.” Honestly. The big announcements we hear from this government and the lack of delivery; this is what it looks like for those families. It is simply not good enough.

Likewise, I welcome the funding to partner with community housing providers in regional Western Australia to deliver 100 new houses to support those sleeping rough in our country towns. I have stood in this place and advocated for Avon Community Services over the years. It provides supported and unsupported housing services in the wheatbelt, but, like so many community housing organisations, it is struggling to meet demand. The house it has for 18 to 25-year-olds has 20 people waiting to go in. The people in there cannot be shifted out even though they are ready to transition because there is nowhere for them to go. We then have this waitlist, which I would say is small in comparison with the real demand that they are aware of, but there is no capacity to engage and get people on a pathway to home ownership or stable housing. I am very keen to know from the Minister for Housing whether Avon Community Services will be provided access to this funding. Will there be funding in addition to purchasing those houses or rentals for the wraparound supports that we know are needed when a community housing organisation is successful?

When it comes to GROH, it is well known in my part of the world that the nurses’ quarters are some of the worst in the state. In towns like Wyalkatchem, it is like the dark ages. They are living in little single dormitories with shared bathrooms, if they are lucky. It is having an impact on the ability of the WA Country Health Service to attract and retain nurses in these communities. The answer from the government is to turn around to the local government and say, “If you build it, we’ll give you some rent for some of it.” I think there are about 350 people in town, so this local government’s rate base is not significant. That housing stock then falls out of the purview of the Housing Authority and the community is left without a tenant or the ability to pay out the full loan. It then has to borrow, which will impact its ratios as well. It is a no-win situation. The community wants to be able to support the hospital in town. It wants to be able to attract and retain staff, but it does not have the capacity and it is being asked to do something that is actually the state government’s responsibility. They need better. It is not just in Wyalkatchem. Other communities have also been involved.

I have a solution for the Minister for Housing and the Housing Authority. This was raised in front of Hon Darren West at a recent forum we had in Northam at the Muresk Institute for the Wheatbelt Futures Forum. The Avon Community Development Foundation has very successfully built a number of homes for executives in Northam.

[Member’s time extended.]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It has built the project—delivered it! We provided the funding when we were in government. It has land and the capacity to fund more houses. There is an encumbrance on its title. It needs the Housing Authority to remove it so it can become financially bankable, then it can get to helping the Minister for Housing deliver the houses he wants to get on the ground. This has been an ongoing conversation for over 12 months. It is really simple to fix. I do not know why it has not been done. There you go; it is a solution. We can get additional houses on the ground in Northam, where there are no rentals and no housing stock, tomorrow if the minister tells the Department of Communities to get rid of the encumbrance on the title and let them go.

I was also looking for funding for the Western Australian College of Agriculture in Cunderdin. It is an exceptional college. It has done some amazing things. We invested significantly when we were in government but there has been very little since we left government. I understand numerous business cases have been put forward by the Department of Education on behalf of Cunderdin agricultural college for upgrades to the residential accommodation for the students and also for the staff. Three staff sharing one house is not ideal. It needs an expansion of the workshop. I think some work is needed at the piggery and there are a number of other projects. It has not been successful in the past. There is a line in the budget for agricultural colleges. I heard the member for Warren–Blackwood talking about the funding going to her electorate so it is known where that funding is going to land. I would very much like to know whether Cunderdin agricultural college has finally been successful in its application for funding. I hope the Minister for Education is listening.

Likewise, I come back to Northam Senior High School. We have spoken in this house about violence in schools. It has been on the front page of the paper. It desperately needs funding to put a fence around the perimeter of the school. They regularly have incursions from outside of parents, friends and family coming onto school property unknown and unfortunately causing some fairly unruly behaviour and putting staff and students at risk. I am not making this up. It is absolutely a necessity. The schools need some support to access funding to put in a perimeter fence. I have 10 minutes left and I have a little bit to get through.

I refer to roads and the Great Eastern Highway. Last night, while I was sitting and putting the final touches on my budget contribution, I got an email that sums it up perfectly. The email from Peter states —

Hi Mia

Last night I saw Adam Papalia —

I presume that is the Minister for Police, but I am happy to be corrected —

saying that W.A has good quality roads. He obviously has not travelled the GEH lately.

Since moving back to the country, I have first hand seen how poor this main east, west artery has become, and travelling along it on the weekend has led me to this email to you.

There is not 1 overtaking lane travelling east between Northam and Baandee.

I was in a train of approx 16 vehicles trailing an oversize load, including roadtrains for more than 20km, with speed down to 80 kph at times. To me this is an accident waiting to happen, with drivers becoming frustrated and over taking at inappropriate times.

There has been a massive increase in both roadtrains and oversize loads since i moved to metro 10 years ago.

I believe, apart from improving the quality of the GEH, the input of at least 3 overtaking lanes is of the utmost importance for the safety of our country drivers who use this road, generally on frequent occasions

I can absolutely agree. Some work has been done on the Northam —

Mr P. Papalia: Do you know what I said?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: No, but I have limited time. Some work has been done and I concede there has been some funding, but that is on the Northam–Perth side. Once we get past Northam and out to Merredin and then across, and then there is the Walgoolan section —

Mr P. Papalia: There are two sites—one in Merredin and one in Southern Cross—on that highway.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Yes, and the Walgoolan section has been delayed.

Mr P. Papalia: Regional road safety investment.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Just let me finish. I am talking about the section between Northam and Merredin. We had to fight a long time to get the funding that the minister is talking about for the Walgoolan section of the highway. That is incredibly dangerous. People have lost their lives out there. The section that this gentleman is talking about is the section between Northam and Merredin where there is maybe one overtaking lane. It has a good line of sight, but the road is skinny and there is significant road traffic. On a regular basis it scares the living daylights out of me when I see people tearing up the wrong side of the road to get past a bank of trucks, as Peter has said to me. I would like to see some prioritisation of our major east–west highway in and out of the state so that we do not see fatalities or serious accidents on that road.

In addition, I refer to passive rail crossings. Quite frankly, I was disappointed that the Minister for Transport was very dismissive of my question regarding funding for upgrades to make passive rail crossings safer, especially in regional WA. The Jensen, Broad and Smith families and their friends and colleagues have been campaigning for over 20 years, and I have spoken about this issue in this chamber on a number of occasions. They lost their loved ones at a crossing in the electorate of Central Wheatbelt and it has changed their lives forever. To give them credit, they have persistently worked with every government and every organisation that has an interface to try to improve the safety at these crossings. The bare minimum that they are asking the minister for is to replace the Give Way signs at these passive railway crossings with Stop signs. I cannot imagine that will break the bank. They also want to know what funds are going to be allocated to unlock the federal funding that has been made available. That was really the question. Is that funding there? There is a line item. We are seeking answers from the minister about how that will be applied, what priority that has been given and how the government will then go about prioritising which passive railway crossings will be dealt with first. It was an opportunity for the minister to give hope to these communities and their constituents. Unfortunately, that is not what we were left with after that question the other day.

Finally, I am disappointed once again there has been is no indexation on the Country Age Pension Fuel Card. We have very limited public transport in my electorate. We have the *AvonLink*, the *MerredinLink*, the *Prospector*, and some very infrequent Transwa buses. There is very limited transport between communities and almost none within. There is a taxi service for people who live in Northam, but it is expensive and a lot of people cannot afford it. We certainly do not have the transport between communities that is necessary for many in my towns. The fuel card is a lifesaver for many of our pensioners on fixed incomes. I said last week that this was an opportunity for the government to index it. It has not been indexed since Labor has been in government. A service charge also gets applied by vendors. The government should have shown some generosity to those who receive the Country Age Pension Fuel Card, as it did for metropolitan public transport users. It would get nothing but credit and kudos if it went down that path.

As I stated from the outset, as a local member I was disappointed with this budget. The Central Wheatbelt has 27 local governments and my vibrant little communities are in a special part of the state. I was pretty horrified by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs' response and I hope that is not more broadly the way that the cabinet and people in the Labor Party think about the wheatbelt, which is, "You are pretty close to Perth so you can all drive if you need to educate yourself on a major reform that this government is bringing in", yet landowners, local governments and significant stakeholders want to do the right thing and are being denied the opportunity close to home. It flies in the face of decentralised government and thinking and, quite frankly, I hope the minister goes away and thinks about it and comes back and says that he got that wrong. I am not holding my breath.

We produce food and minerals. We are a destination for tourists. We have renewable energy on a significant scale, yet families are struggling and there is a lack of housing for essential workers, a lack of investment in land development and essential infrastructure. I have outlined some of the issues I was hoping the government was going to address in the budget. There is still an opportunity for that to be cleared up as we go through the estimates hearings and I am hopeful there will be some more as people get out and about and the ministers want to talk more about the detail of the budget, but I fear that we have been left with very little and certainly no major announcements for the wheatbelt that I can see.

I want to finish off on a different note. As we respond to this budget, there is a national debate taking place on the Voice and I have put on record my support for the Voice. I know there are concerns in the community and it is right to have this debate. It is a significant issue that deserves debate. We have a responsibility as lawmakers, as leaders in our community to engage in respectful debate, to lead where it is difficult to forge a path. There is no risk to our nation to recognise in our Constitution the people who have lived and loved this land for many thousands of years. It is the right thing to do. There is no risk in including a clause that provides that there shall be a pathway for these people to raise issues with the Parliament and for governments to seek advice on policy and issues that will impact them and our future as a nation. Mark my words: our future success as a nation is intrinsically linked to the fortunes of our Aboriginal friends, family and colleagues. At the very least, to those who would take a purely economic view, all the evidence is that engaging with Aboriginal people to design and deliver funding and services for Aboriginal people gets a better outcome for the taxpayer dollar, so there is their reason to say yes.

For those who say it divides a nation, I invite them to read the stories of Veronica Yarran McGuire, Sue Bennell, Charlie Dick, Darren Grassick, Trevor and Frank Davis, Brenda DeAtta, Ian Rivers, Joan Hill, Matthew Jackman and Aya Dannin in the latest publication of the *Humans of the Wheatbelt*. In their lifetime, not some distant past, they have experienced division—economic, social and physical. They are elders and upcoming leaders, community members, mothers, fathers, aunties and uncles. I do not know where they stand on the Voice but they will have their opportunity, like everyone else, to have their say when the referendum date is set.

For me, the Voice is about acknowledging our past. We cannot change that. It is about acknowledging that what we do now is not working. We can change that. It is about honouring those who have been harmed as a result of failed policy by working to create a different future together. Please read these stories and understand that the division exists in our nation already. The Voice is about reconciliation and a chance for us all to come together.

MR D.J. KELLY (Bassendean) [3.38 pm]: I rise to make some comments about the budget that has just been handed down and the Appropriation (Recurrent) 2023–24 Bill 2023 and Appropriation (Capital) 2023–24 Bill 2023. I intended as part of my contribution to make some comments about the Voice. Given that that is where the member for Central Wheatbelt finished, I might deal with that first. It is probably fair to say that the member for Central Wheatbelt and I have not agreed on a lot in the 10 years that I have been in this Parliament. I congratulate her for the comments that she just made about the Voice. The forthcoming referendum is a great opportunity for us to take the reconciliation journey forward. I organised a small event at the Bassendean Hotel a couple of weeks ago and I had a couple of Indigenous women come along and speak. One of the women who spoke is a leader in the community. She said she was at a meeting of women elders who have gone through the stolen generation experience. The comment made to her was that if the referendum failed, they would prefer to die first rather than see the referendum fail and then die of a broken heart. That is pretty powerful stuff. There is a lot at stake in this referendum for not only our First Nations people, but also the rest of us in the community who want to see an Australia in which we have a joint future—a fair future for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

I thank the member for Central Wheatbelt for her contribution. I just hope she is making those representations to her National Party colleagues nationally because Barnaby Joyce in particular is one of the most destructive voices in this debate. It is very sad that the leadership of the National Party is officially campaigning against the Voice. I would not normally say this to the member for Central Wheatbelt, but more power to her within her party, and let us hope Western Australia gets across the line when the referendum is finally held.

More specifically on the budget, I suppose the one area in which the member for Central Wheatbelt and I will disagree is that the cost-of-living measures in this budget are significant. The \$400 electricity credit for everybody is very meaningful. The additional amount for people who are also in receipt of a number of commonwealth payments

is significant. Some 350 households will get \$826 in electricity relief. That is very significant cost-of-living relief for people across Western Australia, including people in my electorate. Under the stewardship of the Liberal–National government, every year the price of electricity and water rose at rates higher than the rate of inflation. Every year the Barnett government was relentless in the way it hiked up fees and charges. This government has kept fees and charges below the rate of inflation. In fact, in some years when we take into account the electricity credit, the cost of a basket of household goods actually reduced. The member for Central Wheatbelt spoke passionately about this issue and the plight of some families in her electorate. Some of the stories she told were compelling. Should the Nationals WA and the Liberal Party ever get back on the Treasury bench, I hope they remember the statements made by the member for Central Wheatbelt today because in government, her party had a completely different track record.

The cost-of-living relief in the budget is significant. The \$650 credit for small businesses will also be well received across the state, including in my electorate. That is a significant relief. Some small businesses are struggling and some are doing well. That payment will do a lot for those businesses that are finding it difficult. We are experiencing smaller electricity price increases than people on the east coast. One of the reasons for that is we did not privatise all our electricity assets and we have kept electricity, essentially, as a function of government for households. On the east coast, households are at the whim of the market because successive governments privatised electricity generators and put the market in the hands of the private sector. The Liberal and National Parties have been great advocates of privatisation over the years; they have privatised many assets. In the not-too-distant past, they were going to privatise Western Power. As if on cue, the Leader of the Opposition has come into the chamber. Privatising assets like electricity and water markets is only a pathway to misery. I hope that members on the opposition benches take note of that should they ever get back on the Treasury bench.

The other thing I wanted to talk about is climate change. The government has committed \$2.7 billion for Synergy to build a really impressive energy storage system, totalling 700 megawatts, including a 500-megawatt battery in Collie, an additional 200-megawatt battery in Kwinana, plus a new wind farm at King Rocks, with a wind generation capacity of 210 megawatts. That is a very substantial commitment by this government towards greening our energy market in Western Australia. I congratulate the government for announcing that package. An additional \$126 million has been set aside for network upgrades. When we move to renewables, there will be additional costs for the network. The government is making a very substantial investment in renewable energy and network upgrades.

We on this side of the house have committed to getting the whole of the economy to net zero emissions by 2050, in contrast with the Liberal and National Parties, which have been blockers in this area for decades. They are climate change deniers. They are two parties that have played politics with the future of the planet. The Leader of the Opposition is shaking his head. The National Party and the Liberal Party have played politics with the future of the planet for over a decade. I think it was Barnaby Joyce who said that a lamb roast was going to cost \$150 if the federal government took action on climate change. We now have a federal government that is willing to take on this issue. I am pleased that as a state government we are also doing our bit. As I said, we have provided substantial investment in renewable energy, in storage in particular, in the budget. That is not all. To get to net zero emissions by 2050, we have to work with the whole economy. The sectoral emissions reduction strategies are currently being worked on across industry by government. The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation is leading that work. The government is sitting down and talking with industry sectors across WA about how they plan to reduce emissions so that the state can meet its target of net zero by 2050. That work on the sectoral emissions reduction strategies is anticipated to be finished by 2023. That is incredibly important work. We can set a target, but if we do not work on the plan, we will never get to that target. We can do what we can in government. The investment that I have already talked about can get the government's own emissions targets down, but in order to reach net zero by 2050, as a government we have to be working with industry. I am very pleased that that sectoral emissions reduction work is being done across industry in Western Australia. I look forward to seeing what those plans look like at the end of 2023.

I want to mention a few other things. I want to congratulate the government for its continued work to support Metronet. The electorate of Bassendean is already serviced by three stations on the Midland line, but there is considerable congestion because people from Ellenbrook come south. A lot of them park at Bassendean train station and get on the Midland line. We welcome the people from Ellenbrook as they visit Bassendean, but it is much better for the people of Ellenbrook to have their own direct line into the city. The Ellenbrook train line will provide great access to the network for the people of Ellenbrook, but there will also be new train stations at Malaga, Noranda and Morley. They will service the western and northern parts of the Bassendean electorate. Constituents of mine in suburbs like Beechboro, Lockridge, Morley, Bayswater and Bennett Springs are really looking forward to that new train line coming on stream by 2024. Tackling climate change involves a lot of things, one of which is improving public transport.

I also want to mention that I am very pleased that the government is continuing to roll out the electric vehicle network that I started to work on when I was the responsible minister. More and more people are demanding access

to electric vehicles. Although most owners of electric vehicles will charge them at home, having a public charging network is absolutely crucial, so I am very pleased that the state government is continuing to work on the electric vehicle network. I am also very pleased that the federal government has also come on board and is making funds available to the states to improve the network.

Finally, I want to mention the new women's and babies' hospital. I know there has been some commentary around the government's decision to move the new women's and babies' hospital from the Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre to Fiona Stanley Hospital. I think the people of Bassendean will welcome that change of location. The idea of not having a construction site for a decade at QEII will very certainly be welcomed by the staff at QEII. Rather than the residents of Bassendean having to cross the city to get to the King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women or the new QEII site, they will be able to go down the freeway and get to Fiona Stanley. I think having the new women's and babies' hospital located there has been well received in my electorate.

Congratulations to cabinet for putting together such a good budget. I always love it when the opposition talks about financial management. I have been in this place long enough to remember the chaos we had when Troy Buswell was the Treasurer. I remember one night when we were debating the Barnett government pushing up debt to over \$40 billion and Brendon Grylls came into this chamber and said that if he had his time over, he would do it all again. He gave a great speech about the fun you could have when you are a reckless economic manager. That is not exactly what he said, but it was in practice what he said. The question we put to him that night was, "Brendon, if pushing debt up towards \$40 billion was a good idea, why did you not tell the people of Western Australia that was the plan before you went to the election?" Of course, he had no answer to that because prior to the 2005 election, the then government went to the election saying that all its plans were fully funded and fully costed and we knew that simply was not true. Congratulations to the government on the budget. I look forward to seeing a number of these projects roll out over the next 12 months.

MR P. LILBURNE (Carine) [3.53 pm]: I rise today to contribute to the Appropriation (Capital 2023–24) Bill 2023 and the Appropriation (Recurrent 2023–24) Bill 2023, which the Treasurer delivered in the Legislative Assembly last Thursday, 11 May, 2023. The member for Rockingham, the Premier; Treasurer of Western Australia, Hon Mark McGowan, MLA, has once again guided this most wonderful of states within the Australian Federation through uncertain global issues and dynamic monetary circumstances. It is with sensible decision-making and moderately conservative, variable analysis that this Premier and Treasurer has confronted and prepared Western Australians to triumph over the challenging national economic conditions. The Treasurer has successfully built upon his careful strategy of debt reduction, economic stimulus, economic diversification and attention to cost-of-living relief in this state budget. It truly is a relief to my constituents in Carine that our Treasurer has formed what I describe as possibly the most harmonious and succinctly balanced approaches to economic management this state has seen in the last 80 years.

The Western Australian public knew that the McGowan Labor government had to fix an inherited financial disaster. The Western Australian public knew that the Labor Party of Western Australia had to make tough decisions and would have to work hard to get the state budget back on track. As a result, net debt is now in decline for the fourth consecutive year. The Treasurer has reversed the debt trend left by the Liberal and National Parties of Western Australia. This fact is testimony to the now common adage within all electorates that the Labor Party of Western Australia, led by the Premier; Treasurer, is the superior economic manager. Other elements of facts that continue to support the adage are put forward by Standard and Poor's recently returning WA to a AAA credit rating. The Western Australian public knew these facts before the budget's delivery on Thursday, and it further secured the adage within conversations among all sectors of the Western Australian populous, regardless of the demographic. It is with great honour and humble appreciation that I completely endorse all elements of this state's budget. I am deeply proud to be a member of the McGowan Labor team and look forward to presenting all aspects of this economic instrument to my constituents in Carine.

I have decided that my thoughts regarding this budget can be best reflected in three titles that are best illustrated by a Venn diagram. Those titles in my Venn diagram are: economic excellence, forward thinking, and delivery. The analysis of these elements and the subsequent confluence are the topics I would like to examine further. It is truly a telling tale when the opposition alliance, as it prefers to call itself, is reduced to a bumbling amalgam of individuals who are inherently negative and risk averse to clear policy creation. The historical albums that surround all members of the Legislative Assembly in this place today articulately record how the acute lack of economic prowess and a dysfunctional void policy approach by the conservative parties in this state has left them in disarray. In contrast, the McGowan Labor government has demonstrated economic excellence by investing \$39 billion into state infrastructure projects over the next four years. The infrastructure includes new hospitals, new schools, upgrades to the Metronet rail system, major road projects, and the decarbonising of the electrical grid in Western Australia.

I have mentioned the endorsement from the rating agency Standard and Poor's regarding the Western Australian government's management of the state's economy. The economic excellence is also exemplified by the economic growth rate of 4.25 per cent in 2022–23. Western Australia's growth rate, which is at its strongest level in nine years, provides students in Western Australian schools with a chance to demonstrate their learning by discussing the economic impacts for our state from positive multiplier effects. Students may well be asked in their ATAR exam

how a positive multiplier would influence the Western Australian economy. A key tenet of Keynesian economic theory is that of the multiplier—the notion that economic activity can be easily influenced by investments, creating more income for companies, more income for workers, more supply and, ultimately, greater aggregate demand.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 2440.]