

Dr David Honey; Ms Mia Davies; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Shane Love; Acting Speaker; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Geoff Baker; Mr Hugh Jones; Ms Jessica Shaw; Ms Jodie Hanns

PREMIER'S STATEMENT

Consideration

Resumed from 16 February on the following question —

That the Premier's Statement be noted.

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe — Leader of the Liberal Party) [9.17 am]: The Premier was successful at shutting the borders, but he has failed to manage the rest of the state. On Tuesday we heard the Premier outline how well his government has done over the past five years. The truth is, as outlined by my colleagues on this side of the house, cracks are appearing in almost every aspect of government. First and foremost, the Premier boasted that he has protected the health of Western Australians, yet what do we see in our hospitals? Ambulance ramping is at record highs, the hospital system is struggling to maintain adequate staffing levels, especially in regional WA, and sick people are having critical surgery cancelled. There have been 682 days of WA's hard border and the McGowan government is still not ready, with no clear plan in sight. The Premier closed the border, but he let the house burn down. Western Australians have now realised that the social contract with the Premier is a one-sided agreement. Western Australians have been vaccinated, they got boosted, they wear masks, they stay home if they are deemed to be a close contact, and they have cancelled numerous travel and personal plans. They have done what they have been asked to do and they were promised that they would get their freedoms back on 5 February. What do they get instead? They get endless spin, obfuscation, secrecy and no reopening date from a Premier who is clearly driven by opinion polls and not science. Western Australians' lives are in limbo, thanks to the McGowan Labor government.

Liberal-National governments have a proud record of delivering and investing in regional and metropolitan health services in Western Australia. What do we have now? We have record ambulance ramping times, hospital staff shortages, record blowouts in elective surgery waitlists and the suspension of elective surgeries. In the previous Parliament, the McGowan government was boasting that it had cut hospital expenditure as an example of its fiscal responsibility. Now that the damage has been done, it is boasting of record expenditure. The reality is that it is simply playing catch-up for a system that it ran down. In early February, the Premier said that his health team was reducing elective surgery lists in preparation for anticipated higher case load numbers. We now see the government delaying that decision because the anticipated case loads are lower than expected; however, this is only a few weeks' reprieve. We know that this is not the first time that the McGowan government has put elective surgeries on hold, creating chaos for those patients who need to book in and have critical surgeries. Elective surgery was suspended in March 2020, June 2021 and August 2021 because the hospital system could not cope with non-COVID cases. That was because the McGowan government had not done the work required to prepare and equip our hospitals. Our hospital system is under extraordinary pressure. Ambulance ramping is at record highs and last year 490 code yellow alerts were reported. That is a clear indication that our hospitals cannot cope.

The Australian Medical Association has been alerting the government to this crisis for some time. In August last year it highlighted the crisis in our hospitals and put out a press release titled, *Public hospitals: Cycle of crisis*. Our hospitals are full, there simply are not enough hospital beds or doctors and nurses, and tragic stories of deaths, deterioration and delayed care are becoming increasingly commonplace. That is the real reason that, once again, elective surgeries are going to be suspended, with no COVID-19 cases currently in WA hospitals. We know the recent decision has nothing to do with anticipated high case loads and everything to do with a health system that is in shambles. There are chronic staff shortages across hospitals in WA. Australian Nursing Federation state secretary Mark Olson is saying that regional hospitals are at risk of closure because of chronic staff shortages. There is already a critical workforce shortage across regional WA hospitals, and the longer the state borders remain closed, the more the issue is expected to worsen.

Doctors in our public hospitals are so burnt out by the health crisis that some are even considering early retirement. There is a toxic workplace culture in our hospitals and, as was outlined by the shadow Minister for Health, the member for Vasse, the government is so afraid of what workers in hospitals are going to say that it has now cancelled its survey of the opinions of workers because it knows the results will reflect a hospital system that is in chaos. It was not so long ago that employees at Perth Children's Hospital and King Edward Memorial Hospital were rallying to protest staff shortages in Perth and poor working conditions. Western Australians deserve to receive treatment when they need it. They expect an ambulance to turn up when they call one. They expect to be able to get into the hospital when they arrive. What do they get instead? Western Australians in desperate need of medical attention are forced to wait hours on end in the back of ambulances or on stretchers in hospitals. Last year we had the worst ambulance ramping figures in history—not just the patients; paramedics spent more than 52 000 hours, the equivalent of six years, waiting to hand over patients outside hospitals. That is five times higher than the 9 819 hours when the McGowan government came into power in 2017.

Recently, I was copied in on correspondence that a paediatrician sent to the Minister for Health outlining concerns on the rising dropout rate of paediatricians working in this challenging environment. She herself had to close down

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her local private paediatric practice and finds herself locked out of the state and unable to return to her home in WA. Our children suffer while they sit on waitlists. Answers to parliamentary questions show that the median wait time for access to a paediatrician through the metropolitan Child Development Service sits at 16.4 months. Children with serious conditions that require the attention of a paediatrician cannot get an appointment. Figures released in October for speech pathology show that the median wait time is 8.7 months, compared with 4.8 months in 2020 before the first COVID lockdown. I know that there are members in this chamber now who have children. Imagine your child with serious speech issues having to wait 8.7 months. Our children are missing out on crucial treatment and the McGowan government is not doing enough to resolve these critical issues.

Hon Mark McGowan is both Premier and Treasurer and he boasts about the surplus he has been able to deliver for WA. However, a massive surplus is little solace to the people struggling to put a roof over their heads. The state has a budget surplus of over \$5 billion, yet the McGowan government sold off 1 300 public houses. This government has sold off more than it has built. We know that there are more than 18 000 applicants for social housing, representing more than 39 000 people who cannot obtain social housing. We know that more than 2 000 applicants have been on that waitlist for more than 250 weeks. That is almost five years. Meanwhile, we have an out of touch McGowan government that was selling off housing. The average wait time for priority listed applicants sits at 53 weeks—over a year. Where do these people go?

Leaked documents expose how the Department of Communities is failing to meet crucial targets, including those relating to child safety investigations. The most recent appalling story out of the Department of Communities and its failures is a pregnant woman who is being forced to live with a sexual abuse predator because of the lack of housing the McGowan government has made available. The woman is on the high priority list, but she will likely not be given a house before her baby is due in September. The McGowan government should hang its head in shame. It does not end there; there have been no shortage of stories highlighting the failures of the Department of Communities. A recent series of stories by *The West Australian* has exposed dysfunction within Communities, including internal reports that warned of widespread racism and Aboriginal staff feeling unheard within the department. The report by Dr Tracy Westerman was given to the Department of Communities in 2019 but has never been made public and in fact has been hidden by the McGowan government. One does not have to wonder why after reading the leaked documents that highlighted major systematic issues of a disintegrating department. *The West* article states that although Dr Westerman's report made 49 recommendations, there were internal concerns as the recommendations had still not been implemented.

Another internal report found that of group of about 300 children who had been removed from their families by the department, homelessness had been a contributing factor in 37 per cent of cases for Indigenous children—over one-third. The department is not only failing to provide housing for these families. This failure is also leading to children being removed from their families. Further harrowing reports show noncompliance across several key areas. This includes child safety investigations that are meant to determine whether a child is in need of protection. These are meant to be completed within 30 days. For the Perth area, investigations were taking, on average, 128 days, with just 14 per cent completed within 30 days. In an estimates hearing it was also revealed the whereabouts of one child under the care of the department has been unknown for at least 100 days, while another has been missing for more than 50 days. The WA government admitted that as of 31 August, the living arrangements of 11 children aged between 13 and 17 years who should be under the care of the department were unknown. Five ministers are responsible for the mega-department of Communities keeping account of children. Children under the care of the Department of Communities are being ripped away from their families only to be placed in other high risk situations with no clear plan for their care. The system is not sustainable and does not provide optimal situations for our youth.

The rental crisis in the state is causing enormous distress. For the first time in my memory we face the situation of people who are working in full-time employment unable to afford any housing. WA's rental vacancy rate is around 0.9 per cent, and a balanced market is around 3.5 per cent. In the middle of 2021, there was a recorded rise in middle-class homelessness, with people with full-time jobs unable to access safe and secure housing.

A research report put together by the WA Centre for Rural Health looked into the rental crisis that is forcing Geraldton women into homelessness and job loss. The report found that eviction or end of tenancy was the strongest reason that someone would drop out of work. Close to 30 Geraldton women at risk of homelessness were interviewed, 11 of whom had children. Nearly half those women were couch surfing. The McGowan government's inaction is forcing women and mothers into dire situations. Unfortunately, stories like these are not isolated. Hundreds of Western Australians are being forced out of their homes, with nowhere to go, and with no action from the McGowan government. The state Labor government has no effective plan in place to deal with the massive pressure that will be placed on the already overstressed rental housing market in Perth once the borders eventually reopen.

Saving lives and saving jobs has been the Premier's rhetoric. Meanwhile, senior company managers are packing their bags and moving interstate. We cannot get talent into the state, and too much of the talent that we do have is leaving the state. Businesses need certainty. Sticking to an opening date is critical to their operations, yet the

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Premier is staying silent, keeping his cards close to his chest and revealing nothing. Wesfarmers is relocating its senior management to Melbourne, and we are hearing that many other companies plan to follow.

Event promoters are also giving up on Western Australia. We cannot put the blame on people in the promotions industry, given the sudden and ad hoc changes the government is constantly making to the rules that affect it. The people in this industry are frustrated. They are facing setback after setback. They are suffering at the hands of the McGowan government's constant rule changes and ever-escalating restrictions.

The McGowan government's woeful business support packages are a further display of how out of touch the McGowan government is with industry. A Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia survey completed last year indicated that many businesses were reporting multimillion-dollar losses. The business support package barely scratched the surface of those losses. The report stated that 57 per cent of the businesses surveyed indicated a negative impact from the border closures. The CCIWA also reported that this state is 50 000 workers short. That is impacting a range of sectors, from tourism to manufacturing, hospitality, agriculture and mining—the list goes on. We are hearing from mining businesses that the labour shortage will affect their bottom line. Small businesses are struggling to find workers, and, even if they can find workers, the compounding factor from this government's inaction is that those workers cannot find accommodation.

At an industry forum that I attended last year, Minister Johnston said that our electricity grids should be reliable for the next 12 months. Meanwhile, homes and businesses across the state of Western Australia are constantly being left without power. The minister does not need to wait for his recently announced inquiry; he needs to act now. The latest Economic Regulation Authority report shows declining system reliability, yet we have had no statement from the minister acknowledging the problem or demonstrating that he has taken an interest in the problem and is doing something about it. The report shows that the number of power outages lasting for more than 12 hours increased from 45 000 in 2016–17, the last year of the Liberal–National coalition government, to over 98 000 in 2019–20, and 70 000 last year. That is 55 per cent higher than when the Labor Party took government. Western Power is expending significant sums, yet our system performance is in decline. That suggests a lack of focus on the necessity of the system and a lack of direction from the minister.

Ongoing power outages in the midwest are costing small businesses thousands of dollars, damaging local tourism opportunities and leaving residents frustrated and upset. One example is Ellie Drage from Horrocks, who operates the local store. She has had to spend \$30 000 on generator hire because of the multiple power outages in Horrocks. Residents in Horrocks who have been tracking the outages since 4 December last year have recorded more than 100 hours without power. What about those who cannot afford a generator? What about those whose medical devices and medicines require refrigeration? Minister Johnston, as Minister for Energy, has absolutely no stated plan to tackle the blackouts.

Minister Johnston, as Minister for Industrial Relations, also has no stated plan at this stage to tackle the 257 sexual assault and harassment cases on Western Australian mine sites.

[Member's time extended.]

Dr D.J. HONEY: The energy system in this state is becoming not only dramatically worse, but also dramatically overpriced. Data from the ERA published last month shows that in 2021, the level of financial hardship had started to rise again and consumers were struggling to pay their power bills. In 2021, the number of electricity disconnections steadily increased for customers unable to meet the conditions of their instalment plans. The report states that the one-off electricity bill credit was effective in reducing consumer bill debt; however, after the credit had been applied, the average amount of debt owed continued to trend upwards. Will the McGowan government provide a long-term solution to this problem or will it continue to watch as many Western Australians struggle to keep the lights turned on? Actions speak louder than words. People want to see actions.

The Minister for Energy has made a great deal about the impact of renewable energy. The minister has promised Western Australians that the increase in renewable energy will lead to reduced power charges in this state. Yet what do we see? We see in coming budgets two per cent increases year on year. We see a government that has no control over energy or other utility costs. We see a minister who is not sticking to his word to the people of Western Australia.

We have a government that speaks tough about the borders but is lacking when it comes to being tough on crime. Almost every day we can pick up the newspaper and see articles about violent attacks in our suburbs. A grandfather from Greenwood was beaten with a torch by an intruder in his own home and left bloodied and bruised. The Gypsy Jokers travelled from Kalgoorlie and reportedly carried out a brutal attack on a man in Haynes, who had his arm and leg broken, while a three-year-old who was in the house during the attack had to barricade themselves inside and call 000. An attack in Guilderton only four days ago on a caravan has left two men in an extremely serious condition, with one fighting for his life. Under the McGowan government, the level of violent crime is now 14 per cent above the five-year average. The Premier is telling Western Australians that his top priority is keeping Western Australians safe and saving lives. Clearly, he is not referring to stopping violent crimes against people.

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The Labor government is clearly failing our children and their education. The Minister for Education and Training stood in front of the media before schools went back and stated that schools would be “the first to open and the last to close.” On the first day back to school, two schools were closed. By the end of the week, several schools had been shut down. As of yesterday, 31 schools and classrooms had been shut down, barely two weeks into the school year. The Minister for Education and Training stood in front of the media on Thursday, 3 February and said, “There is no COVID crisis”, yet 31 schools or classrooms have been shut down, with whole classes of primary school students forced into isolation. That sounds to me like a crisis. On 2 February, Minister Ellery also strongly rejected changes to the self-isolation rule from 14 days to seven days, yet, five days later, the minister changed her mind. On 7 February, only five days into the new school year, just as advice and material was being published on the Department of Education’s website around the 14-day self-isolation requirement, the minister changed her mind and the rules for schools were changed yet again. It is no wonder that schools are grappling with the new measures and expectations around how to manage children or teachers who are sick or isolating. At the Premier’s press conference on 2 February, he also rejected the idea of moving to a seven-day self-isolation rule and stated that 14 days is safer; it is about saving lives and saving jobs. Now that the Premier has reduced the self-isolation period to seven days, is he no longer about saving lives? The government’s decision-making is clearly chaotic and done on the fly. It is a common habit of the McGowan government to chop and change, with little to no preparation or notice.

Despite having two years to prepare, the Minister for Education and Training is not prepared; her so-called leadership is based on a kneejerk reaction. The McGowan government flip-flops around on its rules, leaving school P&Cs and parents confused, with little or no warning. With the recent announcement of the closure of school camps, Forest Edge Recreation Camp director Graeme Watson laid off all 20 of his staff and anticipated that he would lose \$300 000 in revenue from the 15 school groups he had booked in for February and March alone. Unlike the McGowan government, school camp providers have spent these past two years planning and preparing. They have put corrections and actions in place so that they can safely accommodate the students, yet they are being punished by a government that has no clear direction. That is just one example of one business that is affected by this latest strategy of the McGowan government. It is a great example of the Labor government not understanding businesses and the impacts that the decision had on them. Unless someone is a billionaire, bureaucrat or union official, WA Labor does not give a toss about them.

What is the strategy of this Labor government? Does it know what it is doing or does it make it up as it goes? The governance of this state is completely chaotic. This government has had long enough to prepare to reopen our borders. Frankly, we are sick of the excuses. The Premier is no longer operating on legal and health advice. It is now clear that he is making political decisions. That is his prerogative, but let us be clear on what is happening. We have clearly moved from decisions based solely on health advice from the Chief Health Officer to the Premier now calling the shots. The Labor government refuses to release the Omicron modelling. How can the people of Western Australia trust a government that will not share critical information with them? The Premier broke his promise to Western Australians. He promised he would open the border once we reached a 90 per cent vaccination rate of people aged 12 and over. We surpassed the vaccination target, yet the Premier still refused to give people certainty and set a new date. The government has a responsibility to provide certainties to separated families and Western Australian businesses. Why is it that every other Premier and Chief Minister can provide a clear plan but Western Australia’s Premier cannot?

We are still waiting for the Omicron modelling on which this government based its decisions. The Premier and the health minister have refused to release it until it is ready. We have to ask the serious question: on what is the government basing its decisions? We heard from the health minister that the modelling would not be released until the government had all the available data. It is an absolute oxymoron. The reason we have a model is so that we can predict the future. We do not wait until the events occur and then try to apply a model and say that the model was somehow working. Every other state in Australia is using a model. Western Australians are variously told that we may or may not be using it. The Premier and the health minister need to come clean and release the modelling to the people of Western Australia or admit that they are incompetent in providing it.

Tourism is another sector that has been failed by this government. The Premier says that tourism has never been better. Has the Premier even bothered to talk to people in the industry? We heard the Deputy Premier say that he took a trip recently. To say that tourism in Western Australia has never been better completely denies the facts. Tours, attractions and events in Perth have reported an 82 per cent downturn, while their regional counterparts said that business had dropped by 55 per cent, according to figures from the Tourism Council Western Australia. Triple J Tours, which runs boat cruises along the Ord River and Lake Argyle in WA’s Kimberley, faced a significant blow after the delayed border reopening. The business had been starting to gear up for the border reopening and started spending money. With the border delay, the company has already lost more than \$170 000. The latest national visitor survey reveals that the WA tourism industry declined by more than half, or \$4.3 billion, between March 2020 and March 2021. In comparison with 2020, there is no longer federal and state government support such as JobKeeper, grants and fee waivers to alleviate the associated cash flow crisis. Perth is the primary destination for out-of-state

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visitors and it has been the most affected part of WA, with overall business activity declining by 72 per cent. Businesses are already shutting up shop. The McGowan government's decision-making on the run does not solve the problem.

Western Australia is a wonderful state and deserves excellent government. Unfortunately, short of shutting us off from the rest of the world to manage COVID, the McGowan government has failed to manage the rest of the state. We have a health system that cannot cope with normal case loads and is ill-prepared for a COVID surge, out-of-control violent crime and record rates of homelessness. Vulnerable children are not being protected by the state and businesses are struggling due to a massive worker shortage, exacerbated by the border closures and the constant COVID rule changes. Western Australians deserve better. We deserve a government that is more focused on the needs of the community and less focused on opinion polls. It does not take much skill to close four routes in our state. It takes much more skill to properly manage the rest of our state.

Amendment to Question

Dr D.J. HONEY: On that note, I therefore move to amend the question before the house. I move —

That the following words be added after “noted” —

and that this house calls upon the McGowan government to recognise and remedy the impact that its chaotic management of COVID-19 is having on families, communities and businesses across the state

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Opposition) [9.46 am]: I rise to support the amendment moved by the Leader of the Liberal Party. I commend him for his contribution to the Premier's Statement. He made some poignant observations about what has been occurring in Western Australia over the last couple of years. His amendment calls on the McGowan government to recognise and remedy the impact that its chaotic management of COVID-19 is having on families, communities and businesses across the state. I think every member could stand and speak to this amendment.

I have a number of pieces of correspondence that were sent to not only members of the opposition, but also members of government, hot on the heels of the decision of 5 February, in relation to other anomalies that have arisen as a result of the decisions around some of the restrictions that have been put in place, the flip-flopping and the lack of clarity on some of these restrictions. One of the common themes that comes out when I discuss this with businesses, families and communities is the lack of clarity, the lack of a plan and how we arrived at this point, having had two years and the luxury of time and, as the Premier says, a sensible and sober approach to try to manage this pandemic. We have been able to look across the border to New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Queensland, yet we could only describe the last few weeks in WA as chaotic. There has been a real impact since the Premier stepped away from following the health advice and the decision that was made on 20 January.

We accept that there was a requirement for more people to have access to the boosters that have been made available, but we do not accept that on the same day that the Premier made the announcement, we were left in limbo. That has created all sorts of problems, affecting businesses in the north of the state, businesses that are trying to manage mandates in our Perth metropolitan area or tourism areas in the south west and families that are trying to reunite. So many people have been left stranded, in limbo and without clarity. That generates and creates anger. When we asked questions of the Premier yesterday, after he made it very clear that a decision would be forthcoming on what the next stage of COVID would look like and when the borders would open, he said that the government was waiting for a yet-to-be-defined level of the population to be vaccinated for the third time. He could not tell us what that level or trigger point was. The government is waiting for the cohort of children who have been unable to get vaccinated to be vaccinated, but the Premier could not tell us what that magical number is.

The government is also watching the number of COVID cases in the eastern states, but it cannot not tell us what the level of infection in those communities needs to be. When the government puts all those things together, we are meant to get some magical date. The Premier is unwilling and unable to provide that date. We are unable to determine whether he is unwilling or unable because he will not answer the questions that we have asked in Parliament. In addition to that, he has refused to answer questions about the advice provided by the Chief Health Officer, advice that the Minister for Health said this government relied on when the decision was made to abandon opening the border on 5 February. That information is about waning immunity. People have gone out and done the right thing and got themselves vaccinated, but now the efficacy of their booster shot is waning. There is no clear answer as to what needs to happen next if the border does not open any time soon. Will people be required to get another vaccination? Will they be protected? What will that mean for the Western Australian population, particularly the vulnerable cohort? Those questions have not been answered by the Premier and the health minister. They are not unreasonable questions. I outlined that yesterday and in the questions that we have been asking in Parliament.

I will go through some of the correspondence that I have received and the discussions that I, as the Leader of the Opposition and a local member, have been having with people in Western Australia who have been impacted by

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this decision and the lack of clarity. I want to make it really clear that it is the lack of clarity about what would happen after the Premier made his decision that has caused the most grief. I clearly understand that we want a higher rate of booster shots for our population. I do not understand what rate that needs to be. I do not understand a raft of other things because the Premier refuses to share that information, and that is what is expressed in the correspondence that has been received by my office.

Yesterday, I briefly mentioned that I had had contact with the family business RedSands Campers that operates across the Kimberley and into Darwin. It is one of the businesses that I met with a couple of weeks ago. It is the business that I referred to yesterday that has decided to shut its Kununurra post and retract its services. Adam, who runs the business—he is the person I have been dealing with—has stuck it out. He has really tried to maintain all of his employees over the course of this pandemic. Today, we heard the Deputy Premier talk about how proud the government is that it has been able to put a funding package in place to support businesses after suddenly having a moment of clarity and realising that even though the Premier has been saying that the tourism industry has had a smashing couple of years, some have not. Although we have raised that issue again and again, it has fallen on deaf ears. A compensation package is now available, but it will be a drop in the ocean for some operators, given the losses and stress they have had to endure and their struggle in being able to plan and make sure that they can hold onto staff and build up staff levels so that they can manage what is ahead in 2022. All of that is impossible without a date. There is a cut-off for them. When we met with businesses a couple of weeks ago, they said they needed to know the date in a couple of weeks; that was their cut-off date. Adam's cut-off date has passed and he is now starting to reduce what is an amazing tourism offering in our state's north. It is a high-quality tourism offering that primarily services the international market. He did everything he could to switch to the domestic market. He has held on to as many of his employees as possible, but he just cannot do it again. The business will shift its operations in Kununurra across to Darwin. Who knows whether the business can reactivate in Kununurra when the borders eventually reopen. It is a small family business that has done wonderful things in the north of our state. When I met with Adam and a number of his colleagues, I wrote down what he said: "When the Premier says tourism has never had it better, it hurts." We welcome any of the government's surplus being directed towards businesses that have been terribly impacted. It will be a drop in the ocean for some operators. It will not be enough to sustain them through this 2022 tourism season.

I visited the goldfields over the summer recess and met with a number of organisations. Questions were asked about how organisations such as women's refuges will operate and provide services to the most vulnerable in our community when Omicron arrives. It is here and replicating significantly. There is absolutely no guidance coming from the state government or the organisations that are supposed to provide support to organisations that provide vital services in our regions and the metropolitan area. They have been left to their own devices and have turned to their counterparts in other states to see what they have put in place. I talked to an organisation in Kalgoorlie. In regional communities, there is no alternative if there is no service such as a women's refuge. There is nowhere for those women to go. If there is an inability for women to go to such a facility because it is deemed as an exposure site or it is overcrowded, they will simply remain in unsafe circumstances. The staff who work there are also concerned about coming into contact with people who potentially have COVID and how they will maintain the organisation's services. When I met with this organisation and a number of others—this would have been three or four weeks ago—they told me that they have given up on waiting for guidance from the government. They said, "We'll just get on with it whilst we are going about what we need to manage every day." They are already under pressure every day. The challenge is that they need to do business as usual while planning for COVID, but they are getting no guidance from the government about providing that very essential service. This can be said about organisations that provide a women's health service or a women's refuge in Kalgoorlie and it can also be said about businesses in Kalgoorlie.

I met with the Kalgoorlie Chamber of Commerce and Industry when I was in Kalgoorlie. It raised some real concerns about small businesses being left to fend for themselves. The chamber was seeking guidance and information about how it could provide advice to its members and give them clarity, but there was none to be had. The number of affected businesses and organisations is not small. The same can be said for businesses and organisations in the goldfields, the Kimberley and my electorate. We have received the same feedback from business and community members in Albany, the great southern and the south west. Confusion is real, as is the lack of clarity, because this government seems unable to make a decision and to provide a plan without flip-flopping.

I will read a letter from another business owner that was sent to my office; I will get to some of the correspondence relating to families and individuals. This letter was sent to members of the state and federal governments, media and opposition. It is dated 21 February, the day after the border announcement was made. It is from the manager of a business. He writes —

Dear Mr McGowan.

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During last night's press conference, you said that the change to the border rules was going to be hard for some industries and businesses, and that you would convene some meetings with them. I am reaching out to you to please ask that you do that with our business as a matter of urgency.

I am the CEO of a West Australian based business that has created world first robotic technology for cleaning drinking water tanks, mining assets, wastewater facilities and similar installations. We have invested millions into the development of this technology (most of it funded from the personal mortgages of the Directors) and have created multi-award winning technology that we now have contracts for both interstate and overseas. Based on your promise to re-open the borders on February 5th, we were preparing to deploy teams to Victoria, NSW and Singapore in February to fulfill long overdue contracts and have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars preparing teams and technology to execute these works for essential service providers such as water utilities and power stations.

The announcement last night is a devastating blow to our business which provides employment for 45 Western Australians. We believed you when you promised to re-open the borders on February 5th, and were relying on that undertaking. Frankly we are gutted at the late change. We have not been eligible for the same assistance packages that East Coast businesses have been receiving last year as we are located in WA, even though the border closures have financially impacted us arguably as much as any East Coast business.

Throughout the whole pandemic we have tried in many different ways to get a single line of contact into your state government, to be able to discuss border movements in a structured way. We have not once been successful ... If we were able to get some certainty that we could ... at least be guaranteed of getting our workforce home to WA, we would have the courage to send them interstate or overseas to work, however we have never been able to achieve this. **We need this as a matter of urgency, and I respectfully implore you to reach out to our organisation to discuss this requirement ...**

It goes on.

A lady called Sasha wrote to me, also on 21 January. She states —

Mia, my in laws were booked to arrive in WA on 22 February. My mother in law is in the early stages of dementia, time is not in our side, she doesn't meet the compassionate grounds for travel into WA, spending time with someone before their mind dies is just as important as spending time with people who's bodies are dying. My husband and I have done everything asked of us, triple vaccinated, wear masks, stay at home when ordered to do so. We work for the state government in emergency services and are now considering leaving WA as there is no plan and no certainty here. It's a disgrace that he —

The Premier —

was allowed to backflip the decision, it's not an 'unpopular position' as he describes it, it's a decision that is devastating, lacking compassion and seemingly illogical. By the time we get the state to 80% triple vaccinated most of us will need fourth shots and on we go round and round while the McGowan government fails to act and fails his people.

We want out and family in. Please help us Mia, we have no hope and WA will soon be in our rear view mirror while we head for a saner state.

This letter is from an epidemiologist, Dr Melanie, and is also from 21 January. She says —

No one wants to live through an Omicron surge, and some level of modification of the reopening plan is defensible, but the response by the WA government is disproportionate to the risk in several ways. I'm an epidemiologist, which informs my specific points below, but I'm also a WA resident with all my family interstate and overseas. I'm currently in NSW visiting family for the first time in two years, having trusted that I would be able to return quarantine free after the 5th February 2022. I have also commenced a new position that will require interstate travel, which is now unworkable.

Could you please advocate for the immediate release and critique of the specific health advice that informed the new arrangements in place, taking note of the following points:

Dr Melanie, we have been trying! We have been asking the Premier those questions. I asked the Chief Health Officer for a briefing. It took four weeks for the opposition to be offered a briefing. When the Premier and the Minister for Health stand in this place and ask us to take a sensible position on these matters, but it takes four weeks for the opposition to be offered a briefing from the Chief Health Officer so that we can understand and ask questions of the person who is providing that advice to the Premier and the Minister for Health, I think that this government is falling short on the promises it made to make sure that it was going to be open and transparent and make decisions in the interests of Western Australians. It is not unreasonable for the opposition to be provided briefings from the

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Chief Health Officer, and I have to say that when the Deputy Premier was the Minister for Health and we asked for those briefings, they were provided. Under this new health minister, that does not seem to be forthcoming. It is an absolute disgrace.

A number of very good points have been made by Dr Melanie in her letter to me and they all go to the points that we have been asking consistently of the Premier—that is, the Chief Health Officer's advice about waning immunity, delaying a date for reopening and the impact that that will have on a community that is highly vaccinated, the impending flu season and the recruitment of staff. She finishes her letter to me by saying —

Why wait until February 5 to allow compassionate entry? There are many Western Australians who need to come home now, for a very wide range of 'compassionate' reasons.

That has been one of the consistent concerns that the opposition has raised throughout this. There has been a lack of compassion when dealing with Western Australians who need to return home, to visit family or to visit family over east and come back.

This letter is from Brendon. He wrote to his local member, who is a Labor Party member. He says —

On December 17th last year my father fell ill and was admitted to hospital. He died on December 21st. No, he did not have Covid, people die of many other things. As he lived in Melbourne and I am effectively trapped in Perth by your government's abhorrent policies I had not been able to visit him during the last two years of his life. I watched his funeral on the web.

My mother and both my parents-in-law live in Melbourne. My mother-in-law has pancreatic cancer.

I am shaking with rage at the news this morning that the Premier has announced that your government has reneged on the plan to open the borders now that we have the highest rate of vaccinations in the world. It is ... particularly nasty and small-minded ... to claim that the borders are open on "compassionate grounds" but put quarantine restrictions on the whole household that make it effectively a choice between living and keeping one's livelihood. It isn't possible to plan one's death weeks in advance. That is not a balanced approach to risk and reward.

It is inevitable that Covid becomes widespread in WA. It is also very clear that McGowan's motivations are entirely political. When it finally happens he wants to be able to say that it wasn't his fault. I find this gutless and immoral and completely lacking in leadership.

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale — Minister for Finance) [10.06 am]: I rise to speak to and, of course, oppose the very silly amendment put by the opposition. The Leader of the Opposition made a number of statements and read out a number of letters that she had received, but she forgot to also state that this state has had the best record in the last two years. On any measure in the global pandemic that we are in, we have the best figures. Whether we look at the economy, health figures or the number of days that we have been in lockdown, we have the best record in the world, yet the opposition wants to complain about that. Members of the opposition, the number one responsibility of any Premier and any government is to ensure the health and safety of its citizens and residents and to ensure that we have a vibrant economy.

I want to go through the various measures. The Leader of the Opposition talked about the impact on families, communities and businesses across the state. Let me start with businesses and the economy. We have the lowest unemployment rate in Australia. I note that the Leader of the Opposition did not mention in her speech that we have the lowest unemployment rate in the country. It is the lowest rate in Western Australia since July 2012. Over 1.4 million people are now employed in Western Australia, a new time high. In 2021, an additional 67 314 Western Australians gained employment, the largest calendar-year gain on record, and that included an additional 55 328 full-time jobs. On any measure, we have been able to maintain a very vibrant economy during this global pandemic. Western Australia has had the strongest retail growth of all jurisdictions, up by 8.7 per cent in annual average terms.

The Leader of the Opposition talked about tourism. I do not know where she has been in the last year, but if she has sought to obtain accommodation in various tourist resorts in Western Australia, she would know that it has been very difficult because they have been packed out. To ensure that we can assist the tourism industry, we have announced a number of measures. The Minister for Tourism recently announced the \$77 million safe transition industry support package, including a \$20 million tourism support program that offers up to \$10 000 to sole traders or \$20 000 to employing business operators; a \$15 million tourism deposit refund program; and events support of up to \$13 million.

Early in her speech, the Leader of the Opposition read from a letter she had received from an individual—I cannot remember his name now. The Minister for Tourism has met him twice and he said that he is very, very supportive of and happy with the tourism support package that the government has announced.

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Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Do not hold me to that. I think that might be the individual, but I am not sure whether that is the individual. I would need to check with the tourism minister, but one of the people that the Leader of the Opposition mentioned has met the Minister for Tourism twice and he is happy with our support package, which he should be.

The Leader of the Opposition mentioned that we have had two years to prepare. I will tell the Leader of the Opposition what the government has done in two years: we have maintained a thriving economy, we have maintained minimal days of lockdown, minimal people have been hospitalised due to COVID and we have had two local COVID-19 deaths—two!—since the beginning of the global pandemic in 2020. Since Christmas, there have been over 1 000 deaths in the eastern states—100 per day on some occasions—so do not talk to us about not managing this global pandemic.

In May 2020, the Prime Minister of Australia—I notice the Leader of the Opposition did not criticise the federal government’s management of the global pandemic —

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

Dr A.D. BUTI: The Leader of the Opposition talked about aged care, did she not? Who is responsible for aged care? It is the commonwealth Parliament. In May 2020, the Prime Minister of Australia said, “We’ve got over the worst of the global pandemic. We can now look forward to better times.” That was in May 2020. Just before Christmas, the Prime Minister said that Omicron had changed everything. Do not go on about two years of preparation for the Omicron surge that we have had. We have had two years of brilliant management of the global pandemic in Western Australia. The Leader of the Opposition knows that from the election result back in March last year. That is why there are only three of them here today—half a team. We listened to them. Back in 2020, they were the ones who supported Palmer; we will never forget that. Western Australians will never forget that. Liza Harvey signed on the dotted line —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent): Member for Moore!

Dr A.D. BUTI: Acting Speaker, I did not interrupt and I am not asking for interruptions. I did not interrupt during their speeches.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition and member for Moore, the Minister for Finance has asked for no interjections, so please respect those wishes. Thank you.

Dr A.D. BUTI: You were the ones who supported Clive Palmer, who sought to bring down the borders; the protective measure that even you said in your speech—the member for Cottesloe also said —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order, please. If you can speak through the chair, please.

Dr A.D. BUTI: The member for Cottesloe and the Leader of the Opposition in their speeches today talked about how the borders have been used as a protective measure against the pandemic speeding in Western Australia. They said that. If they, along with the former Leader of the Liberal Party and then Leader of the Opposition, Liza Harvey, had had their way back in 2020, the borders would have been brought down. What would we have seen? We would have seen what has happened in New South Wales. That is what we would have seen.

They talk about management. It is absolutely absurd. I do not know whether the opposition lives in a parallel universe. What have we had? We have had two years of most business operators being able to operate in a system that has allowed them to employ more people and to have record profits, and retail sales have increased. That is what we have seen. People have been able to compete in community sport week in and week out. They talked about the effect on the communities. They should ask people who play in sporting clubs in Victoria and New South Wales the number of weekends community sport has been closed down in those states. Go and ask them. Go and ask the AFL chief executive officer, Gill McLachlan, how many weeks in the last two years his kids have gone to school. He said, if I remember rightly, that his kids had gone to school for two terms in the last eight terms. Do not go on about our management. We have managed to keep schools operating, we have managed to keep businesses operating and, most importantly, we have been able to keep the economy operating—roaring—and we have also prevented deaths. I do not know what universe members opposite live in! We have had two deaths in Western Australia since the beginning of the global pandemic in January or February 2020. What has happened in the eastern states and since Christmas and the Omicron surge? There have been over 1 000 deaths in the eastern states. Regularly, over 100 people were dying every day in the eastern states. Those opposite know that this is true. They are bereft of any ideas and policy.

It is really interesting that we could not get a word out of them last year, but, of course, since Omicron has arrived and it is very transmittable, and some people are asking for the borders to open, now they are starting to find a voice. They did not have any voice last year. Do not tell me, Leader of the Opposition, that people cannot come to

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Western Australia. Since 5 February, over 30 000 people have arrived in WA not only for compassionate reasons: if you are a Western Australian returning to Western Australia or you have a lineal family connection, you can come back to WA. Thirty thousand people have arrived in WA. We are managing this in an orderly manner. That is why we have a thriving economy. That is why we have not had the deaths that we have seen over east and around the world. Members opposite know that. How can they stand up and bring an amendment to us to say that we have had a chaotic management of COVID-19 and that it is affecting families, communities and businesses across the state? The amendment should say that the McGowan government should be recognised and supported for having a very planned and strong management system since the beginning of the pandemic, and that that has allowed us to live in a free environment, allowed our kids to go to school, allowed sporting events to take place on the weekend, allowed us to have an AFL grand final and ensured that our hospitals have not been overrun; it has allowed our unemployment rate to be the lowest in Australia and allowed our retail sales to go up by 8.7 per cent. That is what the Leader of the Opposition should have brought to the house rather than this stupid motion about chaotic management. There has been no chaotic management.

If the opposition wants to see chaotic management, look at what happened in New South Wales when they, for ideological reasons—not for health reasons, but purely for ideological reasons—did not want to talk about lockdowns. What did they do? They tried to have smaller lockdowns based on postcodes or parts of local government authorities so that this person on one side of the street was locked down and another person on the other side of the street was not locked down. That is chaotic. What is chaotic is what happened in South Australia when the South Australian Premier opened up and there was a wave of infections and then everything had to close down and people engaged in their own self-imposed lockdown. That is chaotic. Look at what happened in New South Wales and in South Australia. South Australia is finally starting to realise and crawl it back. We have not flip-flopped. There has been no flip-flop. When the Premier announced opening the date of 5 February, he said clearly, “Unless there is an emergency or catastrophe.” The Omicron surge has been that. The number of deaths in the eastern states has been that. That is a catastrophe and emergency. Any responsible Premier or government would, of course, react to that. The government is very carefully looking at the evidence and is planning for when we do open the borders. That is what we are doing. But do not say that people cannot come here on compassionate grounds because 30 000 people have come here since 5 February. The Leader of the Opposition knows that.

The Leader of the Opposition misled the house when she said that we have not allowed people to come here on compassionate grounds—30 000-odd people have come here. They have come not just on compassionate grounds, but also because they have family connections or they are returning Western Australians. You know that very, very well, and you misled the Parliament and should be ashamed of yourself for that—absolutely ashamed of yourself!

The government has also had to endure the pandemic without a lot of support from the federal government. We have actually assisted the federal government with medical supplies because we have not had the infection rates they have had over east. We should be complemented. We are the model of managing a global pandemic not only in Australia, but also around the world. I will reiterate the reasons for that. We have had two locally acquired COVID-related deaths since the beginning of the pandemic. On that measure alone, it has been a success. Do the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Liberal Party and the person in the back row think that is not being successful? Would they prefer we had experienced what has happened in New South Wales and over east, where over 1 000 people have died since Christmas? Is that what they would prefer?

A government member: Pretty quiet now.

Dr A.D. BUTI: They are very, very quiet behind those masks. It is probably good that the masks are there to shield their embarrassment.

Would members opposite also prefer to not have the lowest unemployment rate in Australia? We have the lowest unemployment rate in Australia, at 3.4 per cent, which is below the national unemployment rate of 4.2 per cent. Western Australia has had retail sales growth of 8.7 per cent in annual average terms. Would members opposite prefer to not have that? Would they prefer that schools had been closed down for six out of eight terms, with students learning from home? Would members opposite have preferred that? Our schools have been open. We are trying to manage a very difficult situation in schools now.

The Leader of the Opposition also said that the government changed the isolation rule—maybe it was the Leader of the Liberal Party. I cannot remember which one said it. It was about the change to seven days. That is the national code. The Prime Minister of Australia has also declared that we should have a seven-day isolation period. Why is the Leader of the Opposition picking out Western Australia? Obviously, if we had not changed to seven days, the opposition would be complaining that we still require 14 days! The Leader of the Opposition has no ideas of her own. Of course, the opposition opposes, but there has to be some merit and validity to the opposition. The opposition is bereft of any ideas. It is unbelievable. On any measure, Western Australia has managed the global pandemic, and the Leader of the Opposition brings on a motion like this one.

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The Leader of the Opposition talks about the effect on communities and families. I can tell you the lockdowns over east have had a greater effect on communities and families—the lockdowns that we have not had here. We have basically been locked down for only a few days. Is that something we should be criticised for? The Leader of the Opposition represents a rural area. Until the latest Omicron surge, how many COVID cases have they had in the wheatbelt? I wonder how many cases of COVID they have had in the wheatbelt prior to the Omicron surge. I do not remember hearing of any. There may have been a few over the two years, but I do not remember any being recorded. I have been down to Albany. I think people said there might have been a couple in Albany in the two years before the Omicron surge. Is the government to be criticised over that? The community that the Leader of the Opposition represents has been very supportive of the way this government has managed the global pandemic. On any measure, whether it is health, the economy, community building or family unification, we have done a fantastic job.

It is interesting that the Leader of the Opposition and others have mentioned previously that it is awful when people cannot be reunited with their family at a funeral. That is awful. But that is not so much the case now, because, as I said, people can come back to Western Australia. It is interesting that members opposite and others criticised us for people not being able to attend a funeral. But what would be worse? Having to have a funeral because someone has died. We have stopped thousands and thousands of Western Australians from dying. The opposition wants to open up, let it rip and let people die! That is worse. Opposition members see the fact that someone cannot attend a funeral as worse than preventing people dying. That is absolutely absurd. I know that any government I am involved in sees the health and safety of people residing in our state and ensuring we have a strong economy as its responsibility. On those measures, Madam Acting Speaker, we have been a roaring success. We strongly oppose this ridiculous motion.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [10.25 am]: After listening to the minister—I am not sure what he is the minister for these nowadays, not very much.

Several members interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Not very much—and not much of a speech! It was more lies and empty rhetoric from this person. He does not want me to respond to him, but listen to him.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order!

Point of Order

Dr D.J. HONEY: I understood previously the Acting Speaker's words that the speaker indicated he did not want interjections, yet we have a cacophony—a wall of meaningless sound—from the government side of the house.

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

Debate Resumed

Mr R.S. LOVE: Thank you. We had to listen to a diatribe from the minister for—what are you minister for? Is it sport?

Dr A.D. Buti: I will let you know. Isn't it ironic, or isn't it a shame, that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member, are you accepting interjections?

Mr R.S. LOVE: I have actually got —

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Excuse me!

Dr A.D. Buti: The deputy opposition leader does not know what I am the minister for; that is a disgrace!

Mr R.S. LOVE: That is because you never say anything or do anything! Because you have not done anything since you have been the minister for anything. You are the disgrace.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Okay; thank you, minister. Thank you, members. Member for Moore, are you taking interjections, because you asked a question?

Mr R.S. LOVE: No.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Can you direct your comments to the chair, please.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Certainly. I spoke to the chair. It is just that I am just puzzled about what contribution that particular minister has made to debate in this Parliament. I did listen to the speech and it was just full of the same sort of empty rhetoric that we have heard before about supposed actions of the opposition in throwing away any controls on entry into Western Australia. We have never said that. We have never said anything of the sort. We are talking

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about the chaos that has come from all the backflips—all the decisions that then do not become decisions. There is suspicion that a lot of the time what the Premier announces then becomes backfilled with some sort of supposed advice or modelling that we are not allowed to see. We are still looking for the modelling on which he has made his decisions. We are asking reasonable questions. The people of Western Australia should have access to the information that the government is making these decisions with. It is not some sort of commercial-in-confidence factor. There is no reason for secrecy.

Why is the government not open with the people of Western Australia and the opposition? We heard from the Leader of the Opposition about the length of time we have to wait to get the sort of information that the government has at its fingertips every day. We have to wait weeks and weeks and weeks. Then government members come in here and say we have nothing sensible to say. We actually have lots of sensible things to say, but we do not have the information that we need to properly critique what the government is doing. It is our role to critique what the government is doing. It is our role to put forward alternatives. It becomes very, very difficult to do that well when basic information is not provided to us by this government. Let me give an example. We all know there is a housing shortage right throughout our state. In communities from Perth down to the south west all the way up to the north west there is a dire shortage of housing. I, as a local member, sought to get information from the Minister for Housing about the level of social housing and Government Regional Officers' Housing in each of the shires I represent. In fact, I think there were 19 in total that I asked about. The response I got after three months of waiting was that the information was too detailed and the minister sent me a list including Geraldton in the midwest and the wheatbelt, where the member for Central Wheatbelt represents Northam and Merredin. Those figures are useless to me. They do not tell me any information about the housing stock in my electorate. Surely, the super department of Communities has some sort of inventory at its fingertips indicating what houses it has in which towns, and it would take seconds for that information to be generated and put together in a sensible format for me to get an idea of how dire the situation is.

Take the town of Jurien Bay. People would think there is plenty of housing in Jurien Bay. There are a lot of holiday houses and empty houses for much of the year. The local mechanic provides a vital service to the town and his workshop does local transport vehicle services—that is where those needing to get a trailer or a truck inspected for licensing take them. He and his family of four children cannot find a house to live in in the area and he is likely to have to leave. That is the level of housing distress in communities right across my electorate, yet when I ask for a bit of information from this government, what do I get? A minister who is too lazy, or his department is too incompetent, to provide that information. It should be basic information. All I asked for was the number of dwellings, the size, the types of dwellings—units or houses—their age and construction material. This is an area that has been heavily impacted by tropical cyclone Seroja. In about half of the electorate there has been severe damage to housing stock. There are already housing shortages. We know there have been issues with getting trades et cetera, yet this government is too incompetent and lazy to have at its fingertips what the housing situation is in each of those sites. It is an absolute disgrace. All we get is lazy, incompetent ministers coming in here and shouting at us, telling us we do not do anything. You are the government. The government has the resources and all the information. It does not share the information and it does not seek to justify the decisions it makes.

There is a huge blowout in waiting times for housing right across Western Australia. It is an absolute shambles. The Department of Communities is an absolute shambles. There are children going missing in the system. The department does not know where they are. The department does not know what houses it has in individual shires. There are ministers who do not seem to be on top of the portfolios and who share directors general in such a way that I do not think the public service is being properly led. It is a dereliction of the Westminster system not to have that ministerial responsibility under this current system—the machinery-of-government that this government brought in. That is one department in which we see that, and we see similar things, the same sort of issues, in departments such as the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation. The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development is another one. Various ministers share that department and nobody seems to have a handle on what is going on, although I suspect one particular minister holds sway there.

On Tuesday, the Minister for Transport gave one of those very self-congratulatory answers to Dorothy Dixers that the government asks. I do not know why the government bothers wasting the time of the house with that sort of nonsense. It should just put out a brief ministerial statement or press release; that is enough. We do not have to hear the self-congratulation. The minister was talking about the east-west freight disruptions and saying it was good the trains were running again. Of course it is good that the trains are running again. A tremendous amount of work has been done in getting that train service going again. I have been in touch with the office of the Deputy Prime Minister about what exactly has been going on. There has been a huge effort to get that work done in South Australia to get it running again. But from what I can see, it took a week or so for the minister to show much interest. I believe it was 10 days after the cut of the line that she met with the Freight and Logistics Council to go through those issues. The Coles and Woolies—type of supermarkets pretty much run on a supply system by which they keep only as much

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stock as they need to. They have a very good idea of what the stores are all selling, so they can keep fairly thin supplies in their main warehouses. They basically have only a couple of weeks' supply in a lot of the lines, yet the minister waits 10 days before seemingly starting to get cracking and doing anything about it. That is a real problem and there will continue to be shortages on supermarket shelves for some time to come. In fact, there were already shortages on supermarket shelves before the line was cut, and that was the reason she called together the Freight and Logistics Council, I think on 18 January, two or three days before the flooding.

It illustrates that the government really has not done a good job of ensuring that the freight continues to flow over the border. We were having these pressures before the flood, and now we are going to see some real problems restocking over time. We have seen ridiculous situations of truck drivers being locked out of the state. I believe about 300 truck drivers were locked out of the state by the Premier's decision about 5 February. It meant that they could not return to their jobs here when there was already trouble with the supply of truck drivers. Once upon a time truck drivers were plentiful. Now not many young people go into that industry. It is an ageing workforce and it is becoming quite difficult to find truck drivers. That is leading to bottlenecks in supply, restrictions on supply and huge cost blowouts. In fact, in the last quarter alone, the road transport sector overall had a 15 per cent increase in costs. All those costs will flow through to other goods, but Western Australia is particularly ill served, because we have such a thin supply chain with the eastern states. We have the east-west line, the Nullarbor road, and there are a couple of roads through the desert and in the Kimberley. Getting more connection east-west would be a good way of ensuring that we could have a stronger supply chain. I believe the state government needs to call on other governments, such as the South Australian government, the Northern Territory government and the federal government, to work together to put in place stronger supply chains, reinforce those road networks and build new networks so that we can get some produce into this state and have a more reliable system of transport.

There would be other spin-offs as well. In the north, the Tanami Track was completed. That will make a vast difference to exploration. Typically, exploration occurs around infrastructure, where rigs and equipment can be brought in. If there can be more roads in those inland areas, those desert areas, we will see more exploration, more mining and more fat profits coming into the state's coffers. We know this state has done very well from the mining boom. The member for Armadale was talking about how well the state has done in keeping the border shut. It is true that it has been able to keep the border shut and, in doing so, it has had a very large pile of cash build up from iron ore revenues, but it needs to have spent some of that money on fixing the problems we see such as those in the supply chain and the health system.

I know these figures were also quoted by the Leader of the Liberal Party, but there were 52 000 hours of ambulance ramping in the year past, with 490 code yellows at hospitals. That was at a time when there was no COVID in the state. This is the chaotic mismanagement we are talking about—this mismanagement that the member for Armadale denies.

Country hospitals are already under stress and now contingency planning is being put in place for the closure of services in those hospitals when Omicron comes into the community. I suggest that that is rather backwards. I would have thought that more services would be needed, not less. That is a real worry for the people of my electorate and many other regional areas. We have heard how long the elective surgery lists are. I am actually not opposed to elective surgery being postponed when we do have a COVID surge—I understand there will be a time when that will be necessary—but for the past two years, COVID has not been present to any great extent in the community. An article in Tuesday's *The Geraldton Guardian* outlined that 1 102 people in the Geraldton area are currently waiting for elective surgery. That is 1 102 people in a city of about 40 000. That is a damning statistic. That is the situation now, before any cancellation of elective surgery for some time. Albany is not bigger than Geraldton, but it has an even bigger waitlist, of 1 420 people. In Bunbury, there are 1 282 people on the waitlist. These people have been waiting for their elective surgery even before COVID has come in. There is no excuse for this.

The government has run down our health system for the past five years. It has made a belated investment in health, but it has done it at a time when there is simply not the workforce to develop. It should have been recruiting and training nurses. What would be wrong with training our graduates to take a place in our hospitals? A lot of graduate nurses do not get these training places when they graduate. It is a disgrace. We have to import nurses, yet we have young people who have done their degree who cannot get a placement. It is a disgrace. I do not understand how the government can say that it has managed the health system well. Yes, it has kept COVID out—by ruthlessly patrolling the borders and tying up 500 police, which is about 10 per cent of the police workforce, I think, in Operation Tide.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mr R.S. LOVE: That is how the government has done it. It is no wonder that crime is rampant throughout the community when we have 500 sworn officers controlling the borders! Surely that could have been done by public servants with appropriate support from a few police officers, not just all by the police.

It is time this government started to look to the future. It is time this government reviewed what it has done. We have been asking for a review of what has happened since the start of this pandemic. The government should keep

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looking at what it has been doing to see whether it can improve. It just does not want to take responsibility for any of its actions. We know that the former Minister for Health was sacked over Christmas. We now have a new minister, right at a time when the government already knew that Omicron was coming into the community.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mr R.S. LOVE: It knew that the system, which was already failing, was going to come under enormous pressure, yet it put a woefully inexperienced person into the position of Minister for Health. It is the biggest portfolio in the entire government; it soaks up an enormous amount of government resources. It is a huge responsibility, but the government put in place an inexperienced person who is woefully unprepared, at a time when we are about to face the biggest public health crisis that this state has ever seen. How ridiculous is that!

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members, please!

Mr R.S. LOVE: That is a disgrace. I think the amendment that has been put forward by the Leader of the Liberal Party, which I will take time to read out again, deserves the support of all members of this house. I will read it to remind members what it says. It states —

and that this house calls upon the McGowan government to recognise and remedy the impact that its chaotic management of COVID-19 is having on families, communities and businesses across the state

The house has heard from us about what has happened to families. We have seen the backflips. I urge every member of this house to support this very worthwhile amendment that has been brought to this house by the Leader of the Liberal Party.

Division

Amendment put and a division taken, the Acting Speaker (Ms A.E. Kent) casting her vote with the noes, with the following result —

Ayes (5)

Ms M.J. Davies
Dr D.J. Honey

Mr R.S. Love
Ms L. Mettam

Mr P.J. Rundle (*Teller*)

Noes (35)

Mr G. Baker
Ms L.L. Baker
Ms H.M. Beazley
Dr A.D. Buti
Mr J.N. Carey
Ms C.M. Collins
Mr R.H. Cook
Ms L. Dalton
Mr M.J. Folkard

Ms M.J. Hammat
Ms J.L. Hanns
Mr T.J. Healy
Mr M. Hughes
Mr W.J. Johnston
Mr H.T. Jones
Ms A.E. Kent
Mr P. Lilburne
Mr M. McGowan

Ms S.F. McGurk
Mr D.R. Michael
Mr K.J.J. Michel
Mr S.A. Millman
Ms L.A. Munday
Mr D.T. Punch
Mr J.R. Quigley
Ms A. Sanderson
Mr D.A.E. Scaife

Ms J.J. Shaw
Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski
Dr K. Stratton
Mr C.J. Tallentire
Mr D.A. Templeman
Mr R.R. Whitby
Ms S.E. Winton
Ms C.M. Rowe (*Teller*)

Amendment thus negatived.

Consideration Resumed

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe) [10.50 am]: I look forward to delivering my reply to the Premier's Statement today. Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the outstanding work done by the volunteer firefighters, the Department of Fire and Emergency Services crews, the chopper pilots, the fixed-wing bomber pilots, the shire personnel, the support crews and the communities who all worked under terrible conditions during the fires on Sunday, 6 February, and then during this past week further south. The losses during such an event are incalculable. Although we can quantify losses in infrastructure and stock, the mental recovery after fires of this magnitude will take years. The communities of Wickepin, Narrogin, Corrigin, Bruce Rock, Shackleton, Bremer Bay, Lake Grace, Jerramungup, Hopetoun and the surrounding areas will all unite to provide help and support to all those affected. The reports back from the fireground from seasoned farmers and firefighters are that it was the worst fire that they have attended, which says a lot. Certainly for the Wickepin and Narrogin fire, without the support of the choppers and the fixed-wing bombers, the outcome would have been a lot different.

The member for Central Wheatbelt outlined the impact of the loss of telecommunications during the fire. We know that this impact can be devastating. With our reliance on mobile services, to lose this service during an emergency is not something that we can or should tolerate. Pole-top fires, clashing wires, maintenance failures and a massive drop in power reliability is causing much anger in the regions. It was only last Saturday at the Dumbleyung tennis

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tournament that I was talking to the wife of one of our farmers. She was very upset at how the fire had potentially started. They lost several hundred head of stock. Once again, the lack of maintenance and the many pole-top fires have created issues right through the summer for people in the agricultural areas. It was pleasing, however, to hear from everyone as we surveyed the fireground that the working combination between DFES and the volunteer firefighters was outstanding. I commend the DFES crews and the work that they have done. I also commend the shires and the farmers who will always get to the scene of a fire as quickly as they can, and for the way that they embraced the DFES support.

I also send my best wishes to the communities of Bridgetown and Denmark in their recovery from the devastating fires. I have been speaking to Terry Redman, the former member for Warren–Blackwood, to get an update on fires in the Denmark region and the impact that has had on his community.

I will move on to the Premier's Statement. It was underwhelming at best. The Premier had nothing new to say and instead followed the spin that has led this government for the past five years; substance is sadly lacking. The tricky issues that he says his government is not afraid to tackle must include the electoral reform that was introduced and passed virtually the minute that Parliament resumed after the election last year. To have put this at the top of his list of priorities is quite breathtaking. From this we can only assume that reduced regional representation is a priority for this government, but we must remember that it was not on the agenda. With the decimation of royalties for regions, the neglect of essential services in the regions and the disregard for serious issues, we do not have to presume that this McGowan government is not a government for the regions—we know it is not. The focus of royalties for regions is now on cross-subsidisation of water supply to the regions, subsidisation of orange school buses and returning dividends to the state government. Remarkably, the word "agriculture" did not even get a mention in the Premier's speech, even though the sector returned a record harvest of over 24 million tonnes of grain. Again, that is not really a surprise to those in the sector who have been watching this government with a growing concern for the sector's future.

The backflip from the Premier on the border opening was no surprise. The surprise was that it took as long as it did to change. We knew from the Premier's rhetoric and fear-based messaging that once the threat of Omicron became evident, he would never keep his promise. The issue I have is with the way in which the Premier handled the messaging. It took many hours for the Premier to inform the people of Western Australia of this change in policy. The decision was made on Thursday morning and the announcement came hours later. Many things can happen over several hours. People can book flights, sell their vehicles, pack up belongings, sell a house, organise family members to pick them up and accommodate them, get tested for COVID at their own cost, enrol in a university or TAFE course, enrol their children into a school or get on a plane—the list goes on. When the decision was made to change the policy, the Premier had a duty to the people of Western Australia, who had entrusted their confidence in his ability to make decisions, to tell them and warn them, not to avoid media scrutiny with a Thursday evening 7.30 press conference stunt. The growing apathy towards restrictions comes from a broken promise. The Premier said on multiple occasions that 5 February was the opening date and that it would not change. But as always, the promise came with a caveat, which gave the Premier the option of a two-way bet.

A broken promise in this climate is more than a political opportunity. The implications for the mental health of those who seek to come home and the fallout for business is substantial. The public reaction to the broken promise probably took the Premier by surprise. The love has gone. If the Premier breaks a promise like this, he should expect a harsh response, and that is what the polls are indicating. The trouble with crying wolf is that the reasons for breaking the promise are lost. Any further demands on the people of Western Australia will be met with cynicism and apathy. Trust is eroded and it is very difficult to get that back. Without doubt, further complications would have had to be considered with the emergence of the Omicron variant—no-one questions that. What we question is the response from this Premier. It feels like we are provided with more information on COVID modelling from the media than we get from the government. We know that many of the claims made by the Premier have been wrong. The public has now set up a Facebook page that shows exposure sites because it is frustrated at the lack of information. Rumour also has it that the contact tracers are so overworked that people are being asked to inform their own contacts of the risk of infection. We are not even close to reaching big numbers of Omicron cases and the system does not seem to be working.

How can the Premier say that there is no reliable modelling on Omicron at this point in time? There have been millions of Omicron variant cases globally and information on its trends and effects across the world. How can the Premier completely dismiss this information and the work of the infectious diseases expert Professor George Milne? The Minister for Health derides and undermines the expertise of Professor Milne at her peril. The expert information from reliable sources should not be dismissed so quickly. It is interesting to hear from the many epidemiologists who have publicly backed Professor Milne and his modelling, yet the new minister who has been appointed to this area seemingly has little in the way of expertise herself in this area. Changing the face of the health minister does not change the health system. When I listen to the rare appearances by our Chief Health Officer, my confidence in

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the health decisions being made by the Premier has me asking more questions than gaining answers. I cannot help but think that there is a chasm of disparity between what the Chief Health Officer says and what the Premier tells us. The trust that so many people have put in the hands of just one man is dwindling. I feel for the public servants who are working long hours behind the scenes trying to make these changes work. Remember, these are public servants who have not had a pay rise in over five years but remain loyal to the role they work in and to the public they serve.

WA is in a policy spiral. The Premier is floundering. The problem with a control-hungry leader is that his ministers are also floundering. The messaging is chaotic. Comparisons with other jurisdictions and comments from the Minister for Health saying how bad the eastern states have done it and how well WA is managing it are childish and only add to the growing cynicism. I am not sure who is advising the Premier and the ministers, but in the words of the Premier, they need to get better advice. We are in a process of following the eastern states' trajectory, and yes, this is of concern. Heightening the concern is a lack of information provided by the previous Minister for Health and the new Minister for Health. For months, if not years, the health sector has been front and centre of major concerns raised by the community. Like a worn-out record, the response has always been: "nothing to see here; all is well". The truth is that it is most certainly not well, and my colleague the member for Vasse has highlighted this on many occasions.

I will not dwell on it, but my biggest concern is what will happen in the regions. The Premier is making blanket statements that testing numbers confirmed that the decision to delay WA's reopening was the right one. It makes no sense. The testing numbers reflect abysmal leadership and that is all. Maybe if the people of WA knew when they could see people from other states and even overseas, they might get tested. Endless comments from the Premier that announcements will come soon and that numbers need to change to some mysterious level only erode any commitment the general public has towards the Premier.

In our small regional communities and centres it is not unusual for people to know who is vaccinated and who is not. I have had calls from constituents who are elderly and would normally meet in a community recreation centre for indoor carpet bowls, for example. They know that the three unvaccinated people in their town use the same facilities at the same time. They are not mandated to show their vaccinations and freely attend the facilities. This has left elderly people who are concerned about their own safety stuck at home because they do not want to be exposed to unvaccinated community members. It seems as though the common sense approach that the shire would stipulate that all people attending the facility would need to show their vaccination certificate has been lost because the notion of common sense has been removed by this government. The cause of this issue goes back to the confusion exacerbated by a government making up policy on the run, adding confusing messages about vaccinations and the effects of single, double and booster shots on immunity and transmissibility. We have a public who have, in some cases, given up, and some are ceasing to leave their homes. The ridiculous situation of having to show proof of vaccination to get a bottle of wine but not to buy food just metres away is being met with frustration and in some cases violence against people who have no choice but to implement these inconsistent rules.

Businesses are reeling. Many large businesses are and will sustain financial losses. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia's survey of 400 businesses, released on 28 January 2022, shows that 65 per cent of respondents report negative impacts while just 23 per cent indicate the delay will have a positive impact. Many businesses are reporting multimillion dollar losses with an estimated average cost of \$2.5 million by respondents. The sectors feeling the pinch the most are agriculture, manufacturing, construction, information and communications technology, and professional services. Recruitment of staff is the main reason for the negative impact. There is nothing new here and it is pleasing to see that some people are being given exemptions. But clarity is again lacking. Our shadow Minister for Agriculture and Food in the other place, Hon Colin de Grussa, has been asking for agricultural workers to be added to the exemption list. This has been met with silence from the Minister for Agriculture and Food. We are unsurprised about this response. Perhaps if the workers had something to do with hydrogen or regenerative farming, the border policy would be easier to navigate. The telling quote from the CCIWA survey was that customers outside WA are increasingly forming the view that doing business with WA domiciled businesses carries risk because of unpredictable COVID regulations. We have seen this with the Wesfarmers leadership team leaving the state and other businesses following. This also applies to our international student sector as well, which will take many years to restore its reputation.

Now to my shadow portfolios. The Minister for Education and Training, when seen, has been parroting blurry policies. Seemingly, the only thing parents and schools can rely on is the provision of some air purifiers, a couple of CO₂ monitors and keeping the windows open. The McGowan government's cut first, consult later strategy continues. This minister is one of the best. From the Schools of the Air and the Moora Residential College in 2017, to now the camp schools and the school balls; and confusion and mixed messaging over close contacts and rapid antigen testing, we have now reached the point at which the media is putting out 20 questions and answers to inform our families what is going on in schools. The consistent response to these policy announcements is the lack of clarity. Watching what happens in the eastern states is helpful, but not as a basis of informing policy. There are too many

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variables. The most marked is the difference in approach between the eastern states leaders and the WA Premier. It has come to our attention that not all schools have been equipped with the air purifiers that are needed. The minister is alarmingly following the government line and making statements that are frankly untrue and hoping that no-one will notice. I have distraught constituents on the phone when their children are seemingly persecuted by school staff because the child is an anomaly. School staff are forced to apply a square peg into a round whole scenario to the extreme detriment of children.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The lack of consistency in COVID protocols is evident. Parents who are vaccinated or unvaccinated can attend a school sports carnival, but no parent can attend an outdoor assembly. Parents can help at the canteen, but parents of special needs children are unable to assist them to get settled into their classroom each day. Camp school bans have now become full day excursions to the same campgrounds, with students and teachers on buses each day using shared facilities at the camp in each other's company during the day. There is something wrong with the system when the State School Teachers' Union of WA and the Principal's Federation of WA are in the media consistently calling for change. Teachers are already tired and their workload has increased, which will be reflected in more teachers taking sick leave. The Western Australian Council of State School Organisations has also highlighted the impact on the decisions made at short notice on school policy. More information on contact rules earlier would have helped. Instead, it was a flurry of instructions at the last minute, which has led to confusion and chaos. Relief teachers are confused about what they need to do if they are teaching at a school that has a COVID outbreak. Do they go to the next school if they are not a close contact, or do they stay home? The Principal's Federation of WA highlights the issue of housing in the regions, which is brought up with me constantly. Substandard housing for teachers and principals who pay unrealistic rents will not attract professions to our towns. Our teachers, principals and support staff in our schools need to hear that they are valued and incredibly important. With wages going backwards and increased workloads, the future of our education system is compromised. The Premier and the Minister for Education and Training seem to be completely in the dark, or if they do know of the challenges, they seem to be quite happy to keep the rest of us in the dark about what they are doing about it. That is what we are coming to expect from the McGowan government.

Teacher shortages are not new; they are happening all over Australia, if not globally. The Minister for Education and Training's response to these shortages highlights her lack of planning. The blanket policy for schools, residential colleges and boarding schools means that principals are forced to look at worst-case scenarios. The obvious outcome of this approach will be more than the bumpy ride that the minister keeps using as her excuse for her lack of planning.

A government member interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The government has had two years.

Principals have become the target of the government's decisions and when there is a backlash from students and parents, it is the principals—not the Premier, the minister or the department—who have to take the heat.

I turn now to international students. The debacle over international students was, and remains, a low point in so many disappointing lows from this government. During the whole international student issue, the minister was either on a long holiday or, more likely, kept out the back in case he said something that did not follow the government line. It would be interesting to hear his perspective on this issue; I hope that one day we will.

A government member: About what?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: International students.

International students and universities have been scrambling after the third and recent announcement: "Sorry; yes, you can come in after all." This change in policy could be understood if sound health advice had informed the backflip. Nothing has changed except the growing fury from the business and education sectors. I have heard of international students who are now too frightened to book flights because they are worried that the policy will change again. Imagine what this is doing to our universities and their business models. Imagine the damage that three backflips have done to the state's reputation as an international student destination. It will take years to repair.

The Premier has said on multiple occasions during press conferences that sport is not a priority, but sport is very much a priority in this state. Sport is a big business. We only need to look at the AFL and the AFLW; the West Coast Eagles and the Fremantle Dockers; Perth Glory Football Club; Perth Wildcats; Western Force; Perth Lynx; West Coast Fever; and the Western Australian cricket team—the list goes on. They are just a few of the big businesses in sport. We have yet to hear from the Minister for Sport and Recreation about how these clubs will flourish in the future. Sport does so much more than provide a business model; it alleviates mental health issues for some and provides a club environment for different demographics. I am not entirely sure what the minister intends to do in his portfolio, but I look forward to some direction in the not too distant future. With more contradictions about which

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sport can be played here under a baffling set of rules about who can isolate in a bubble and who can attend games, and given that the public is clearly outraged about the lack of consistency that is applied to the rules, the Premier cannot possibly be surprised when there is a backlash. Victoria is pitching a tilt at the Commonwealth Games. Again, the Premier has arbitrarily decided that Western Australia will not apply to host the games. That would have been another opportunity to restore our damaged reputation.

I turn now to the sale of the TAB, which comes under my shadow portfolio of racing and gaming. The expression of interest process is apparently underway. We are concerned about funding under the funding model for regional and metropolitan racetracks.

I turn to issues in my electorate. I am pleased to see that the Minister for Energy is in the chamber. I recently attended a community meeting in Esperance with Minister Johnston, who addressed constituents affected by the reticulated gas withdrawal. Had the government been on its game, anticipated the situation that has manifested, and acted eight months earlier, residents would be less anxious and more assured of a successful transition to an alternative energy source. I acknowledge the work that has gone into negotiating a 12-month extension before turning off the gas, which is appreciated by affected residents. However, there is no contingency should the extensive changeover task fall short of the deadline. Industrial customers continue to be in limbo because no suitable solution to replace the reticulated gas supply has been achieved. I look forward to the process over the next 12 months and to Horizon Power working in a proactive fashion. Aside from looking after its 160 Department of Housing customers, I look forward to Horizon looking after the balance of customers, of which there are more than 200, whose gas will be turned off through no fault of their own. Minister for Energy, I look forward to a positive result; I am sure those reticulated gas customers do as well.

I will continue to highlight the deplorable state of Esperance Senior High School and its dilapidated buildings, especially the senior school buildings. Esperance high school services a vast hinterland and it should reflect a modern and safe learning environment for the nearly 1 000 students who attend. I am sure that the member for Southern River appreciates the importance of quality infrastructure and a quality learning environment. It is incredibly important that the teachers and students at the school have a working environment that does not remind them that this McGowan government does not care about the regions. Over the next couple of years, I very much look forward to seeing the McGowan government deliver some quality infrastructure at Esperance Senior High School, which has more than 1 000 students who produce fantastic results despite the environment in which they work.

I turn to aged care in Esperance. Work continues on finding staff to fully operate the 94-bed Esperance Aged Care Facility. The former Liberal–National government contributed more than \$3 million of royalties for regions fund to the facility several years ago. Currently, 20 beds are vacant due to a lack of staff. There is an admission waiting list and a triage system in place due to the lack of staff. A recent community forum saw 130 people attend to discuss possible solutions to the staffing problems. I look forward to strong community support for this issue. I understand that the forum went very well and provided positive feedback. I look forward to positive and continuing support for the Esperance Aged Care Facility.

The reliability of power and telecommunications is a constant issue in my electorate. The areas that are at the end of the line, such as Ravensthorpe and Bremer Bay, are at the mercy of the environment and infrastructure issues. As I have said previously, pole-top fires cause huge problems in the regions. In Dumbleyung alone, 30 fires have been recorded by locals this summer. We know, and have been reminded of, the damage that can be caused by pole-top fires or clashing lines.

On a more positive note, the Katanning Harmony Festival is not far away. This is a fantastic couple of days that highlights the unique community that is Katanning. The Wagin Woolorama celebrates its fiftieth year of promoting the sheep industry and showcasing the agricultural sector. It is a fantastic achievement for the community and as its patron for the past four years, I am honoured to promote and support this wonderful event. Over the past two years, as COVID has impacted our daily lives, the committee has worked through all of the problems and has held its field days very successfully. This year is no different and I wish the president and the committee the very best in another challenging year.

MR G. BAKER (South Perth) [11.19 am]: I rise to reply to the Premier's Statement. I will start by saying that it has been a great privilege and a pleasure to serve as the member for South Perth since the election last year. I have been welcomed by all corners of the community and I do not think I will ever tire of serving the community that I grew up in. During the 2021 election campaign, I knocked on thousands of doors and the message I got from the residents of South Perth was very plain: keep us safe and keep us strong. The Premier in his statement on Tuesday comprehensively spelt out that we are meeting that. Western Australia is still the safest place in Australia, with the strongest economy.

Despite all the things that opposition members have said, I cannot think of a single key performance indicator in health, education, employment, the economy or whatever that I would want to swap with another state's. I get

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approached constantly by people in South Perth who want to pass on to the Premier and the government their appreciation of their efforts. I look forward to implementing our 2022 agenda. In an uncertain world, our agenda fills me with confidence.

It has been a great time for schools in South Perth. I was very happy to be with Minister Ellery, the Minister for Education and Training, at South Perth Primary School when she welcomed kids back to school with principal Karen Owens. That was a very enjoyable event. One of my pleasures this year has been to work with Karen on getting the crosswalk sorted out and sourcing a children's crossing guard on Angelo Street. Peter Rundle will know how difficult Angelo Street can be to cross on a busy morning, so it was great to sort that out.

It was great also to see the scaffolding go up around Kensington Primary School, with principal Bronwyn Jones getting work underway to replace the oldest part of the roof. That has been good to see. When the scaffolding comes down after the roof replacement, we will start working on the basketball courts at Kensington Primary School, which had its ninety-fifth anniversary last year. It looks like some of the school has not been worked on in much of that time, so it was good to see all that happening.

It has also been great to work on the new playground at Collier Primary School with principal Emma Bancroft and her parents and citizens association. They were great at getting very organised. The playground is on the corner of Murray Street opposite the shops, and it was great to open it last year. I am working on a new playground area at Curtin Primary School with principal Jennifer Broz, George Watts and other members of that community. I used to go to Curtin Primary School way back when it was called Coonawarra, and I remember those asphalt quadrangles in the middle of the school. They are still there. They are massive heat sinks that are really bad areas for the kids to play in, so we are looking forward to getting something done with those to bring them into the twenty-first century.

It has also been good to work with principal Digby Mercer at Como Secondary College. A new canteen and multipurpose facility was put in that we opened last year. There was a lovely performance of the Como Secondary College choir, with Bronwyn Sprogowski conducting. It was fantastic. Later this year, we will work on extending the car park and improving traffic calming around Como Secondary College. It has been really good working on those things and seeing those projects come together.

Down at Djinda Boodja at Clontarf, we have been working on new computers for the computer lab out the back for the music students. We have managed to get 20 new computers. I cannot wait to go down there and see the beats that the students are working on. That is a very exciting development for them. These are just some of the things that are happening in education in South Perth.

In the Premier's Statement, he indicated that climate change is the issue of our times and has pledged that WA will be net zero by 2050. We are well positioned to be part of the industries of the future in solar, wind, hydrogen and lithium. I refer members to Lisa Baker's speech yesterday about the urgency of dealing with climate change. To help with this, I have formed the Parliamentary Friends for Clean Energy group with the member for Churchlands, Christine Tonkin; Hon Dr Brad Pettitt; and Hon Dr Steve Thomas. We hope to bring together innovators, lobby groups, industry and government to raise awareness of this issue amongst parliamentarians. I would like to thank the Minister for Energy, whose eyebrows are wiggling, for his assistance with that so far. We hope to have a range of events that involve parliamentarians, so stay tuned to that one.

Environment is much more than just climate change. No government in Western Australia has done more to protect our environment. The Premier spoke of the protection of native forests from logging and the phasing out of plastics. More locally in South Perth, last year we were very happy to open the black swan habitat at Djirda Miya, which was completed in September 2021. This is a bird habitat on a small island just off the South Perth foreshore that cats, rats and dogs will not be able to get into. It will be a nesting ground close to the fresh water lakes on the South Perth foreshore east of Douglas Avenue. It is a great improvement to the South Perth foreshore and it will be a great improvement for the environment down there.

It has also been great to be the local member for the Perth Zoo. I have had a lot of exciting events there. The most recent one was with the Minister for Environment, the member for Baldvis, when we announced the new function centre as part of the Zoo master plan that the state government has funded. The Zoo has a lot of plans for making the facility more relevant to the Western Australian environment and for preserving and protecting our species.

Another announcement that we made at the Zoo was about numbat DNA. It was a pretty exciting event with the Minister for Environment and Associate Professor Parwinder Kaur from the University of Western Australia. Not only was this the first sequencing of numbat DNA, but also it raises the possibility of the revival of the Tasmanian tiger from extinction. This may sound a little bit more speculative, but the numbat is the nearest living relative of the Tasmanian tiger. It was very exciting to hear that this possibility or path has now opened thanks to the work of UWA and Perth Zoo.

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A member interjected.

Mr G. BAKER: Members have to imagine numbats growing. It is exciting. We are a few years from that happening yet, but I was amazed that scientists were willing to say that.

Part of this development was made possible by the Pawsey Supercomputing Centre in Kensington. I have been down there and had a chat to Mark Stickells, the executive director, and received a review of the work that is being done there. It is just extraordinary what the people at the centre are doing down there. They used to have one of the 40 fastest computers in the world, but it has now dropped to 800th because computing power changes quite quickly. They are building a new supercomputer called Setonix, which will be in the top 10 in the world. It will have 65 000 computer cores that can simultaneously address each other. That will lead to an extraordinary amount of computer power. My little laptop has four cores, so I am imagining piles and piles of those on top of each other, and it will be even smarter than that. Just the plumbing of the cooling system for this computer is an extraordinary engineering project. Pawsey will not stop with Setonix; there are many more things that it is going to be doing. The core of what those at the centre do is to service the Square Kilometre Array, which is that astronomical radio telescope in the Murchison. Around that, in their spare time, they can do many other things.

One of the things they have done is sequence numbat DNA, but they are also doing things on coronavirus, cancer and a wide range of things that are computationally intensive. It is a hub for world-leading research that is happening right here in WA, so I am very excited about that. When I think of what is the best thing in South Perth, it is very easy to think of the Zoo, the South Perth foreshore or the wonderful communities around the schools or our sporting clubs, but sometimes I think the Pawsey supercomputer is the best thing in South Perth.

In his speech, the Premier announced an exceptional year coming up for transport infrastructure and Metronet. It is great that people will be able to get around Perth faster and safer. Locally, we are constructing a bridge at the Causeway. This will be a new pedestrian and cycle bridge. The Causeway was constructed many years ago. Anyone who has ridden a bike across the Causeway knows that it is a very narrow cyclepath and when two, three or four bikes start riding in a peloton, it becomes very tricky and dangerous to negotiate when there are pedestrians around. We have committed to constructing a separate pedestrian–cyclepath bridge across the Causeway that will touch down on Heirisson Island and then on the South Perth–Victoria Park side. Around 1 400 cyclists and 1 900 pedestrians will be able to use the path each day. As we all know, South Perth is the centre of Perth’s cycling culture and this new bridge will allow and improve access to the South Perth foreshore and across the Causeway and make things a lot safer. I look forward to the construction of that starting soon.

One great joy of being a member of Parliament is dealing with constituent issues. I want to report on a couple of things. One is that the Collier Park Retirement Village was in a bit of an NBN black hole and successive attempts over a long time failed to get NBN into the Collier Park Retirement Village. We were very pleased when the NBN agreed to deliver services to each individual in the village. I would like to thank Genevieve Mack, the village coordinator, for working with us on that. It has been a really good outcome.

Ros Curbishley of the Como Combined Probus Club approached me about getting a projector for meetings and events, and we worked together to fundraise for that. I am very pleased to say that we raised the funds for the projector and I think I will be presenting that to the club next week.

As a local member, I go to lots of local club and society events. Como Combined Probus Club held an event at which Craig Challen, the Western Australian veterinarian, cave diver, rescuer and former Australian of the Year, spoke about his experience in the Thailand cave rescue. It was extraordinary to hear him talk, but the lesson I pulled from his speech is that when we are faced with difficult situations, we have to make difficult decisions. The correct path may be one that is very difficult to imagine, but once we see it, we should pursue it with all our determination. I could not help seeing parallels between what they did in the Thai cave rescue and the task that is now facing our state government with coronavirus.

One of my other duties was to present a \$48 000 grant to the Red Nose WA office. It was great to meet Till Heike, Julie Verley and Lea Hiser and acknowledge the great work that they do in that very difficult area.

Another highlight during the year was the gathering together of local sporting clubs with the then Minister for Sport and Recreation, the member for Armadale, hosted by the Manning Tennis Club. I thank Dwayne Augustin and Rod Philp for organising that event. It was really great to have a chance to get to understand the needs of all sporting clubs and to hear about the extraordinary growth that sport has had in South Perth over the last few years. Every club, from the Manning Rippers to the Como Croquet Club, in every age group, has enjoyed increased patronage.

The question now is: how do we make the best use of our sporting facilities for all clubs and the community? One of the things that we came up with was improved LED lighting. We assisted the Hensman Park Tennis Club—I would like to shout out to president Colin Napier—to receive a grant to install LED lighting, which means brighter lights, more focused lights, cheaper running costs and less spillage into neighbours’ properties. I have been down

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there at night and seen the lights. It has been a great way of extending the hours of playing tennis at the state league level while keeping all the neighbours happy. It is fantastic.

We have also upgraded the Morris Mundy Reserve cricket pitch and the playing courts at the Como Croquet Club. I say hi to Graeme Broadbent and thank him for working on that project. The courts were in a state of disarray and an upgrade was long overdue. We also worked with Danny Ravn on upgrades to the South Perth Bridge Club facilities. There have been renovations to the Como Bowling and Recreation Club and Manning Memorial Bowling Club. I have been working with Ian and Maree at Como bowls and Greg at Manning bowls to make those important changes.

We have also worked to get defibrillators into all sporting and open spaces in South Perth. The City of South Perth had been rolling out a defibrillator plan for all sporting venues and public open spaces and one of my election commitments was to complete that project. I thank Mayor Greg Milner for working on that because through that we hopefully have made South Perth a safer place to be.

A key part of the McGowan government agenda is health and managing the pandemic. It is the most important thing that we are doing at the moment. In South Perth there have been few occasions in which it has been front and centre. Our new Minister for Health, the member for Morley, launched the ServiceWA app at the Windsor Hotel a few weeks ago. It was very exciting to be there with her and the Vaccination Commander. The ServiceWA app is incredible technology and a great thing for the state government to be involved in.

I have also been working with the Minister for Transport on touchless pedestrian crossings. We trialled the first of those to be installed on Labouchere Road.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr G. BAKER: We increased the links between WA Health and South Perth Hospital. I thank CEO Marcia Everett for helping with that.

There is overwhelming public support in South Perth for the new border arrangements, with limited cross-border travel but compassion and common sense for those who want to come home. I acknowledge the effect of our government's difficult decision on some families and businesses, but we could all see what Omicron was doing across the world and on the east coast over summer, as one case became 20 cases, became 100 cases, became 1 000 cases a day, and 10 000 cases a day in the case of New South Wales. I want to reflect on some of the things that members of the opposition have said. Why would we open our borders into that storm? It would have defied common sense. I want to keep faith with the people in South Perth to whom I said, "Yes, we will stay safe and strong." We are maintaining that as our goal. I want to thank Roger Cook, the former health minister, for his work in that portfolio, which was extraordinary, and welcome Amber-Jade Sanderson who has taken to the health portfolio with incredible ability.

I also recognise the work of Kensington police in our local community. Thank you very much for what you do. We have built a cooperative and honest relationship with each other while working on some of the most difficult social issues in South Perth. I appreciate the work of Kareene Santoro, the officer in charge there and all her staff. It has been really good working with them.

A couple of wonderful awards have been presented in South Perth. As part of my duties and work with South Perth Mayor Greg Milner, it has been great to recognise the achievers in the local community. First of all, David Mundy was awarded Citizen of the Year and Veronica Lawrence was awarded Senior Citizen of the Year. Community Group of the Year was awarded to the Manning Senior Citizens Centre and the Junior Citizen of the Year was Jack Johnston. It was not simple to present those awards. Normally, they would be presented on the South Perth foreshore on Australia Day in front of the Governor, but it was more difficult this year. We ended up awarding Dave's in the middle of the Kensington Primary School oval in front of the P&C at an *Encanto* film night. Veronica Lawrence was presented her award at the Rotary Club of Mill Point meeting at the Royal Perth Golf Club. It was a lot more fun presenting the awards than previously. It was also great to take part in the swearing-in of the South Perth council after the election last year. I enjoy working with the council a lot.

One of the last things I want to do is acknowledge the passing of Michael Beahan. He was a former state secretary of the Australian Labor Party in Western Australia, a senator for Western Australia, President of the Senate and later a powerful advocate in the community. He was born in England and trained as an electrician. In his role as ALP state secretary, he was a key figure in creating a professional campaigning outfit for Labor in WA, before going on to Canberra as a senator in the Hawke and Keating governments. He was an advocate for both social justice and economic reform in a difficult international economic climate. As international secretary of the ALP, he represented the party in international forums. I believe there is a photo somewhere of him on a discussion panel with Fidel Castro, Mikhail Gorbachev, Muammar Gaddafi and Yasser Arafat, with a mostly diplomatic look on his face! After serving as President of the Australian Senate, he moved on to further advocacy roles and played a major part in protecting

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local pharmacy stores from the expansion of major supermarket chains into prescription medicine. I remember his warm sense of humour and passionate sense of justice but also his pragmatism. The spirit of his beliefs have very much become part of the Labor Party now. I pass on my condolences to his widow, Margaret, and his daughter, Kate, and the rest of his family. He will be missed.

Finally, I would like to wish my uncle Lawrie all the best in his recovery in hospital. I pass on to you the well-wishes of many South Perth locals. I thought I knew my family members, then when one of them went to hospital, I started getting phone calls from all sorts of people from across the electorate who missed him. Lawrie, you have made much more of an impression than I think you realise.

In closing, I will return to the theme of the Premier's Statement. Our work here makes a concrete difference, and the Parliament has a lot of work to do this year. We have a full agenda and difficult circumstance but we will rise to the occasion. Thank you.

MR H.T. JONES (Darling Range) [11.41 am]: I rise representing the people of Darling Range to make a contribution in response to the Premier's Statement. It is almost a year since my election to this place and I hope that I have proven to be a steady influence in the area and brought the community together. That is my intent, anyway.

I am new to politics, but listening to the opposition over the last couple of days reminded me of the Weddings Parties Anything song *Monday's Experts* —

Monday's experts
Always know what's best
Always tell you what you should've done
Monday's experts
Always know what's cooking
How the game was lost and how it could've been won
...
Well I see them up the shops; I see them down the street
And when I go up the pub it's nearly everyone I meet
They're saying I should've done this or I should've done that
But by the time they're finished talking well my beer's getting flat
...
Monday's experts
Talking in the tea room
In the workshop and the office talking all around the place
Monday's experts
Hey they've always got the good oil
Pity you can't put a bet on at the finish of the race

That sort of summarises what I have heard over the last couple of days. I, and the majority of Western Australians, thank the Premier for keeping us safe and strong with a very effective response to the coronavirus variants we have faced. We have an outstanding vaccination rate, the lowest level of unemployment in the country, at 3.4 per cent, and the best set of books in the country. We live in the strongest and safest state in Australia and we are arguably doing better than anywhere else in the world.

At the last election WA Labor promised to keep us safe and strong, and that is what we have done. We are continuing with a careful and measured approach to minimise the impact of Omicron in Western Australia. The Premier's overriding objective is to save Western Australian lives and jobs. If we accept that lives and jobs are the priority, then it is easy to justify the mandates that have been implemented, such as the border controls, vaccination mandates and mask wearing. When I am approached in the electorate by people complaining about the mandates, of course I listen to what they have to say, but in the back of my mind I am thinking about saving lives and saving jobs.

In question time yesterday the member for Cottesloe challenged the Minister for Health on her statement that 2 607 lives had been lost in Australia due to COVID since December. It was disturbing that the member for Cottesloe responded, "How many people have died in Australia?" He sought to dismiss and diminish the importance of those deaths due to COVID. There is no diminishing the loss of those 2 600 people and what their families have suffered. One cannot just sweep that away and argue, as some members of the community do, for no restrictions at all.

A very small but vocal number of people in Western Australia—who are entitled to express their point of view—object to monitoring and control measures. I still receive a steady stream of requests to stand up for individual rights. But at the top of my mind is looking after people and their safety, particularly the vulnerable—the aged, immunocompromised and those with disability or medical conditions—who, if exposed to COVID, may have

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severe responses. Prior to 5 February 2022, the anticipated date for the reopening of the borders, I and I daresay other members of Parliament—I know it happened to the members for Churchlands and Bateman—were approached by a lot of people concerned about opening the borders. People came up to me on the street pleading not to open the borders. They were concerned about the death and disease they were seeing over east. They were concerned for themselves and for their families and other Western Australians. I wonder how members opposite would have reacted if they received those approaches. I have not heard those people's voices being represented in this place. They are often in the older age bracket or are concerned about their loved ones, who may be older or otherwise vulnerable. That is a completely legitimate concern. As for those with views against border closures, I would pass them up to the Premier's office. However, at the top of my mind were those people who were scared and did not want to contract COVID-19. They were concerned for themselves and their fellow Western Australians.

Since the decision was made to delay the border opening without restrictions, I have again received correspondence from people opposed to that measure. Most of the correspondence has been from outside my electorate but some has been from within. Some passionate cases were brought to my attention. I acknowledge the people in those situations and how they were affected. Again, I received a lot of correspondence from people thanking me and asking me to thank the Premier for keeping the border closed under the present conditions, allowing Western Australians to return but not opening the floodgates—not letting it rip. The people who approached me were not posting on Facebook; they were ringing me up, meeting me at the markets and talking to me and sending me emails, because somehow they had been cowed into not expressing their opinion on social media.

In one situation, a First Nations lady came to me. She opened with, "Tell Mark McGowan I'm his number one fan." She told me that her 93-year-old grandmother had just passed away of natural causes. She said that if the borders had opened, if Mark McGowan had not controlled coronavirus from the start, her grandmother would have died prematurely. She thanked the Premier for keeping her grandmother safe.

I have spoken before about my family's background in health care. My father is a retired dentist. My mother and sisters are nurses. The acceptance of science, especially medical science, was ingrained in me from the start. I listen to medical experts. I listen to the Chief Health Officer. I do not do my own research—googling facts. My sister is still a nurse; she works in an emergency ward. She turns 59 next month and is counting down the days until she can retire. She has dedicated her entire life to looking after patients who are often angry, aggressive or affected by alcohol and drugs, but she keeps going and does her best. I am sure the Acting Speaker can relate to that. She sent me a selfie about two weeks ago. She has not done that before. She was at work at the start of the night shift. She was in her nursing gear. She had an N95 mask on and a face shield. That hit home. People complain about wearing a mask, but she does that day in, day out on a 12-hour shift at night. That is what she wears at work. She would rather not wear any of those things, but she does, because she does not want to get COVID. No-one working in the health sector wants to get COVID because they know the risks. We owe it to our health workers to do all we can to stop the spread of Omicron for as long as we can. We must wear masks and we must get vaccinated. We cannot afford to let it rip. We, as members of Parliament, need to be strong and united and to keep uppermost in our minds the health and welfare of our constituents, the people of Western Australia. We cannot afford to relent and say it is all getting a bit hard now or succumb to populist pressure.

The member for North West Central rattled off a familiar routine yesterday and he labelled certain seats that government members would not win at the next election. Those people had careers. They are not career backbenchers. There are academics, social workers, paramedics, teachers and scientists. They have all had careers. I cannot speak for them, but if I do not get re-elected next election because I contributed to decisions that save lives, so be it. I do not care, because lives are the most important thing.

Now I will talk about some examples of investments that have been delivered in the electorate of Darling Range by the McGowan Labor government. Prior to the election, the Shire of Serpentine–Jarrahdale advocated for financial assistance to improve the safety and standard of 129 kilometres of roads in the local network, citing an expected cost of \$79 million for a staged 10-year delivery. It is not an exaggeration to say that the state of the roads is the most common complaint my office receives, apart from the COVID mandates, but it is undeniably a significant problem. I am glad to confirm that an \$18 million election commitment has been funded for improvements to the local road network this financial year. It will improve safety and help relieve some of the financial burdens that the SJ shire is encumbered with because it is a growing local government. In addition, we have announced blackspot funding of \$1.4 million towards a roundabout at the intersection of Thomas and Kargotich Roads. There is \$296 000 towards the installation of sealed shoulders, delineation and the removal of roadside hazards on Anketell Road. There is \$120 000 towards the installation of a left-hand turn at Anketell and Thomas Roads, and \$320 000 for widening and safety improvements to Keirnan Street in Whitby. There is further spending occurring at Thomas Road, with a \$38 million upgrade between Kwinana Freeway and Nicholson Road. There is a \$28 million roundabout treatment at the intersection of Thomas and Nicholson Roads, an area that has a significant build-up of traffic,

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especially during peak times. There is \$5 million for planning for stages 1 and 2 of the Thomas Road and Anketell Road freight links.

There was confirmation of \$52 million for the Thomas Road over rail bridge for the Metronet Byford rail extension, which is progressing well. In fact, I went past there this morning and saw about 30 workers on the job, and I thought to myself that the Leader of the Opposition does not support Metronet. She does not support those jobs. She does not support the concrete fabricators like PERMAcast in Cardup that produce infrastructure that we need in this city and around the state. She does not support that and, by default, neither does the Liberal Party.

Of course, the Thomas Road bridge is being built to delete the railway crossing in preparation for the Byford rail extension. Supplying a train service to Byford will be a game changer, connecting people from Byford and surrounds to work and education, as well as recreation and entertainment venues such as Optus Stadium. The introduction of the train service will also necessitate the review of the connecting bus services, improving the reach and frequency of public transport. The recent cap that has been introduced with maximum two-zone fares means that people travelling from Mundijong to the city now save \$36 a week on public transport and those in Byford save \$20 a week. That is a significant saving and a significant incentive for people to use public transport. The train service will also bring people to Byford. It will be a boost to business and tourism.

I was happy to make election commitments in support of some of the hidden gems in Darling Range, including \$50 000 for the old Hopeland School, which serves as a community hall and a tourism destination, and \$50 000 for the Serpentine bridge school, which is essentially a time capsule offering a glimpse of what school was like back in the day. It is a one-room school. Improvements will include providing disability access to those facilities. While people are down Serpentine way, a visit to the Hugh Manning Tractor and Machinery Museum is a must for anyone interested in agricultural history. There are many tractors and engines, most of which are in working order, and they are flashed up for the guests so that they can see how difficult it was to start up some of these engines back in the day. It probably has the best shearing collection in the state. I was glad to be able to present \$6 000 to the museum to provide a ceiling and a lobby in the kitchen area, which has improved the amenity for volunteers and visitors. There is also a very affordable golf course in Serpentine, with sand greens and a thriving membership that still relies on an honesty system for green fees.

The main reason visitors go to Serpentine is to visit the Serpentine Falls, and I am very proud to see that the McGowan Labor government has committed \$3.2 million for the Serpentine National Park upgrades, including redeveloping the visitor precinct facilities and walk trails to encourage a high level of visitation by groups, individuals and trail users. This will have knock-on effects for the local businesses in the area such as the Cup in Serpentine, which is a very small coffee shop situated in the same building as the pharmacy and the medical practice run by Pania. It is a great little cafe. There is also Mr Beans Cafe on the South Western Highway, which is adjacent to Speedy Spanners Mechanics. That cafe is run by Pawan, and he does a mean coffee.

I was pleased to welcome the Minister for Water, Hon Dave Kelly, to the electorate recently and we visited the newly constructed playground and picnic areas at Churchman Brook Dam. I look forward to the next upgrade happening at Serpentine Dam.

As other members on both sides spoke to before, bushfires are an ever-present problem, and a great proportion of my electorate is vulnerable to bushfire. I have previously spoken about the 2011 Kelmscott–Roleystone fires and the impact they had on my family and their neighbours. I echo those thoughts and thank all the volunteer brigades in the electorate, as well as the State Emergency Service and the career firefighters who work tirelessly to keep us safe throughout the summer season. I am happy to see that the budget includes \$2 million for the purchase of land for the \$14.5 million south eastern metropolitan fire station, the location of which is yet to be announced or decided on by the commissioner. It will obviously enhance the fire response in the electorate and provide tangible support to volunteer brigades throughout the area. Darling Range had its fair share of bushfires this summer. I was very pleased to see that our systems have been tested and, touch wood, until now they have worked. The volunteer brigades reacted very quickly and put out most fires as soon as they were alerted and before the Department of Fire and Emergency Services was required to attend. They have had to hand over some fires to DFES, but they have been handed over in a state in which DFES was able to control them, put them out quickly and minimise any losses to property and lives. It was good to see the two new repurposed Black Hawk helicopters, *Yelka* and *Florian*, operating in the area out of the Serpentine airfield. It is always comforting to hear a Black Hawk.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr H.T. JONES: Turning to other spending, the \$74 million police and court complex in Armadale is nearing completion and is expected to be handed over by the end of the year. It will enhance police operations in the area. There has been a significant investment in education, with \$9.7 million for a long-awaited sports hall and refurbishments, including the STEM area at Roleystone Community College. This was the result of strong advocacy by principal Mark Brookes and the P&C, Scott, Mel, Casie, Rakia and others.

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Byford Secondary College is headed by Paul Jones. He is no relation, but we look very similar, we have the same surname and we both like riding motorcycles. I sometimes get asked how the school is going! But we are not related. The school is set to receive \$21.5 million to increase permanent student accommodation, including a new STEM classroom.

I also wish to mention that the 2021 WA Education Assistant of the Year was awarded to Michelle Barrett of Byford Secondary College. As an education assistant, Michelle goes above and beyond to help students learn new skills and build their confidence to succeed. Michelle creates an optimal learning environment to enable students to be more receptive and engaged in class and has a particular focus on supporting Aboriginal students. As a former nurse, caring is a lifelong passion. She seeks to understand each child's background so that she can help set personal improvement goals for all her students. My wife, Cam, has worked with Michelle in the past and is not at all surprised by that award. Congratulations, Michelle.

I would also like to mention Pat Hart, a Roleystone resident who was recently awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia. I will read a bit from the local newspaper, the *Examiner*, which is an outstanding local publication—we have managed to keep ours. The article, written by journalist Chris Fowler, states —

Tireless environmentalist and community advocate Patricia Hart, who served as a councillor and deputy mayor at the City of Armadale, was honoured last week —

On Australia Day —

with a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for her service to the community.

The Order of Australia recognises Australians who have demonstrated outstanding service or exceptional achievement and is presented to appointees by the Governor-General each Australia Day.

“I feel overwhelmed and excited,” said Ms Hart about receiving the award.

“It’s been a lovely response from the community, I feel like I’m sharing it with them. You only achieve by working with others, and together you get the outcomes, so we’re all sharing it together ...

Further awards were presented in Armadale, with Darling Range residents nominated in all categories. I would like to mention Roleystone resident Jim Sharp, who was co-winner of the Senior Community Citizen of the Year Award. Although Jim said that he should not have been nominated—not out of modesty but because he does not accept that he is a senior—he is well deserving. Jim has shown great passion for helping children suffering disadvantage through no fault of their own. He strongly believes education can be the path out of poverty, and that every child, no matter the circumstances, should be given every chance to meet their potential. With this belief, he works tirelessly to achieve this outcome and is achieving success. Congratulations, Jim Sharp.

The Active Citizenship Award for Group or Event was won by the Wildflower Society of WA’s Armadale branch, which is based in Bedfordale. The Armadale branch is well known for promoting the value of natural bushland and associated conservation issues, and for conducting events that are well organised. It is involved in community engagement through displays in shopping centres, local community markets, exhibitions and local schools, which enables branch members to share their knowledge and passion for WA’s wildflowers and raise environmental awareness. Branch members have demonstrated active citizenship through their participation with like-minded community groups in the revegetation and protection of the natural environment within the City of Armadale.

People were also recognised for their contributions in Serpentine–Jarrahdale. The Community Citizen of the Year Award was awarded to Jarrahdale resident Jeanette “Jan” Booth. Her nomination reads —

Jan volunteers her time every Monday for social mornings where she creates a friendly and uplifting atmosphere for people to relax, have a cuppa and chat. She also coordinates the Unwind activity on Tuesday nights. This activity is open to anyone who would like some time to work on their favourite hobby, craft or learn something new.

Jan initiated yarn bombing in 2020 to bring the small country town of Jarrahdale to life with colour and texture. Her creations are fun and inspiring putting a smile on residents and visitors faces.

Yarn bombing involves crocheting around objects in the town. However, someone left their bicycle there too long and it ended up being covered in crochet! It continues —

Recently Jan has taken on the refurbishment of the Jarrahdale memorial. Clearing the space, repainting the memorial, installing steel silhouettes of servicemen and engaging an aboriginal painter to paint the offcuts mounted behind the soldiers.

Outside of her volunteering she regularly visits locals to assist with house repairs, have a chat, or drop food and supplies. Her commitment to the community, her energy, and her love and care for the community are never-ending.

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Well done, Jan.

The Senior Community Citizen of the Year Award was awarded to Charles Kerfoot, another Jarrahdale resident. His nomination reads —

Charles is a tireless worker for both the Jarrahdale Heritage Society and the National Trust. Charles is the leader of a small group of volunteers from the Jarrahdale Community who meet every week to work extremely hard physically to remove the invasive plants and weeds.

He also organises clean-ups of rubbish. It continues —

He has been personally responsible for the removal of large quantities of black wattle, lantana and other weeds from the Jarrahdale Heritage Park.

He also is involved heavily with the care and maintenance of the walk trails surrounding Jarrahdale, ensuring that the tracks remain user friendly and safe.

Thank you, Charles.

The Youth Community Citizen of the Year Award was awarded to Luke Newman, who is actually a resident of Cooloongup in the electorate of Rockingham. The fact that he won the SJ award speaks volumes for his contributions. His nomination reads —

Luke has contributed to his community by choosing to volunteer in three different emergency service organisations. After a 12 month cadetship at Serpentine Fire Station he was invited to join the senior unit and continue assisting as a leader for youth cadets.

Luke has been completely committed to attending and being involved with the Cadets, his level of Fire Fighting is well above what is expected of a Cadet, since turning 16 Luke has transitioned to the Serpentine Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade and is equally committed to this role.

He attended the Jarrahdale Log Chop with the Brigade to assist in traffic and parking duties and has joined evening events with other Brigade members, he has been an inspiration to the cadets and continues to be a motivated team member.

Luke also volunteers with the Mundijong SES and as a volunteer tour guide at the Perth CBD DFES Education Heritage Centre. All three volunteer positions have involved extensive hours of training and weekly meetings over and above call outs and community events.

Luke is a scholarship student at South Coast Baptist College and has arranged leave of absence permission to attend any SES or Bush Fire emergency calls, this initiative is part of his big picture learning and dedication to community participation.

It is no wonder that Luke wants to be a career firefighter. With those credentials and that history, I imagine he will breeze through the selection process. He is a fine young man from a wonderful family. He is 16. He does all these things but he does not get there on the bus; his mother, Sally, drives him around to all these events. She should be equally commended for supporting Luke and the community by driving such a wonderful young man around.

The Clem Kentish Community Service Award aims to recognise longstanding contributors to Serpentine–Jarrahdale. To be considered, nominees must have given 20 years' service to the community, served on several committees and live in the shire. This year's recipient was Trevor Senior. The nomination states —

Trevor has been heavily involved in the Community for the twenty years since he returned to the area. He started junior cricket in Byford and Serpentine in 2001 remaining involved until 2013.

Trevor is a tireless worker for any organisation he volunteers with, giving many hours of his time and knowledge and is a quiet achiever in so many ways.

He has been a member of the Cemeteries management board since 2014 and is currently treasurer of the Friends of the Library group.

He played a large part in the Gazebo and toilets being provided in the Serpentine Cemetery, he has lobbied constantly for the preservation and restoration of Spencers Cottage and provides firewood for the Old Post Office Museum every winter.

Since 2001 he has been involved with, and is currently President of, the Serpentine Historical Society. He has taken on the responsibility for the caretaking and opening of the Old Bridge School —

That is the school to which the commitment was made —

... a school which he attended in his youth.

Trevor is passionate about the heritage and history of the Shire ...

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I must note that when he received his award, he was in tears, because he is that sort of guy. He is modest and he likes the groups that he is part of to be thanked, not himself.

Another award for the community went to Landcare SJ for its R U OK? planting day. Francis Smit heads up that organisation. It ran a planting day. I have to be quick; I have only a couple of minutes left. It resulted in 2 000 seedlings being planted, supporting biodiversity of flora and fauna in the area, and it also brought the community together. It linked people in the community with other organisations such as R U OK? and Act–Belong–Commit.

Finally, just on the Serpentine–Jarrahdale awards, Trevor has certainly filled those boots.

Throughout the pandemic and its restrictions, such as wearing masks, social distancing and vaccinations, the nurses have kept on nursing, the police have kept on policing, the firefighters have kept on fighting fires, the cafes and restaurants have kept on serving customers, the fly-in fly-out workers have kept on flying in and flying out, the construction workers have kept on constructing and the volunteers have kept on volunteering. The common theme is that people just get on and do what they know needs to be done. I would like to thank the Premier for keeping us all safe and strong. Thank you.

MS J.J. SHAW (Swan Hills — Parliamentary Secretary) [12.10 pm]: This is the first speech that I will give for 2022. I have actually held off from speaking about the matter that I will speak about today, so the news that I will talk about is a little dated, but I wanted to make sure that in speaking about it, I gave it the time that it warranted. In my community there was such an incredible coming together of people, a huge expense and investment of energy and such community mindedness, that I did not want to shoehorn it into a three-minute statement. I wanted to make sure that the people in my community who worked so hard, would be genuinely acknowledged and that I marked this as an important moment in time for community building in Ellenbrook. It is a new community, a growing community and a remarkably diverse community that, as everyone knows, is not without its problems, but when it comes together it can achieve genuinely amazing things. I have held off talking about this and I wanted to make sure that my first speech for 2022, for this Parliament, from my privileged position as the representative for Swan Hills, was about something that is genuinely a remarkable thing for my community. It is with great honour that I speak on this matter today in this first week of Parliament.

I want to talk about the Ellenbrook Multicultural Festival. This brand new event was held last year and put on by a brand new entity: the Ellenbrook Multicultural Community. I have been so proud to support that group and so amazed by the genuine effort, passion and dedication of so many diverse people. In a new community, it is so important that we come together, and when we do, that we appropriately acknowledge and mark that fact. The Ellenbrook Multicultural Festival came out of a multicultural mile that was put on by Ellenbrook Mile, a little community group that gets together and organises people to come together to do walks of different lengths around Ellenbrook. In the lead-up to Harmony Week, we wondered what we could do to promote more cohesion within the community. We had seen in Ellenbrook some low-level racism and a bit of tension in some of our school communities. We thought that maybe we should put on an event so that different cultural groups could come together. The theme for the morning was that we all walk together. A couple of hundred people turned up and we held a little sausage sizzle at the end. Afterwards, the groups involved wondered if there might be something more that we could do. Could we be a little more ambitious? If there is one thing that Ellenbrook knows how to do, it is to put on a good party, but all the parties tend to look the same—bouncy castles and a bit of song and dance; it is pretty much the same format. We wondered if we could do something that would allow all our different communities, or as many that wanted to be involved, to showcase their culture, deepen that understanding and bring people together not just on the day, but in the many months leading up to the event as we worked together to see what we could make happen. Out of that process, the Ellenbrook Multicultural Community was formed, a new community organisation. We decided to run this event that would increase community wellbeing, promote that sense of connectedness and allow our various cultural groups to express their cultures with the confidence of knowing that they are accepted, welcomed and celebrated in Ellenbrook. We wanted to activate the township. It is a new, growing township and we wanted to make everybody feel a part of it, welcome in it and celebrated, particularly in our schools.

On 29 October, we held our inaugural event at Charlottes Vineyard. On the day, all our committee members roped in their family members and a heap of other volunteers who worked hard to set up the event and manage it throughout the course of the day without a hitch. I want to go through who was involved. Many people were involved so I will probably miss some, and I apologise to them if I do, but it is important to acknowledge the groups and individuals concerned because in many events like this, many people go unacknowledged. I want to take the time to acknowledge them today.

The event was co-compered by Prabjot Singh and Buki Esin. Prabjot is a good, dear friend of mine and heavily involved in the Ellenbrook Punjabi Council and the Sikh Gurudwara at Bennett Springs. He is an outstanding community leader who ran in the City of Swan council elections last year. He was not successful, but I genuinely hope that he runs again because he would be a remarkable community representative, particularly for a place such as the City of Swan that has such a diverse community. That council needs to be representative of all people who

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live in the City of Swan—sometimes it can look a little male, pale and stale. It would be great to see more diversity on the City of Swan council and Prabjot is the sort of person that we should look to in the future to run. He is an outstanding community representative.

Buki Esin is an amazing singer. She was such a dynamic compere on the day, but the singing—oh my God! She was just amazing. The two of them had a really amazing rapport on stage. They were entertaining and funny. We had the most beautiful welcome to country from Vaughan McGuire. He is a prominent local Indigenous leader and a good friend of mine. I value his friendship very much. We were honoured to have him welcome us to country in a very moving welcome to country ceremony. The event itself had drama, dance, fashion parades and musical performances. Across the day, over 5 000 people came to our inaugural multicultural event. Goodness knows what future events will hold in terms of attendance. I want to run through the performances because it will give members a sense of the sort of groups that were involved. Our first performance was from Bardi Mogridge and the Wern Nop Boys from Ellenbrook Secondary College. That morning I had a chat to Heath Dullard, the principal of Ellenbrook Secondary College. The boys were really nervous. As a group of young Aboriginal men, it was their first ever public performance in which they would express their culture, and they did a remarkable job. Everybody got involved. There is a really humiliating video of me dancing; I was busting a move with the Wern Nop Boys. It was fantastic. The kids got involved and we had all these kids running around. It was absolutely fantastic. Well done to the Wern Nop Boys! There was on-stage turban tying, which was fantastic. Minister Tony Buti had a turban tied, as did Vaughan McGuire and representatives from Western Australia police's community engagement division. Inspector Don Emanuel-Smith had a turban tied. I am sure that anybody who is involved in multicultural affairs through WA police is aware of Inspector Emanuel-Smith's amazing work.

Another very notable member of the Western Australia Police Force was there: Senior Constable Sam Lim, who was the 2020 Western Australian police officer of the year for his work with multicultural communities during the pandemic, and whom WA Labor is very proud to have standing as the Labor candidate for Tangney. He is genuinely connected to cultural communities and deeply committed to the Western Australian community. He demonstrates his commitment every day through his enduring service through WA police. I am quite sure that he will be an outstanding representative for Tangney. He is just the type of candidate that this party preselects because we believe in diversity and the importance of having Parliaments that genuinely represent the true diversity of our Western Australian community.

St Helena's Catholic School performed three songs in Aboriginal and Zulu South African languages. The Peranakan community gave us a fashion show displaying the Baba Nyonya culture. Ellenbrook Child and Parent Centre, run by Anglicare, presented a multicultural fashion show. Halle House of Fashions also did a fashion show of traditional African fashions. Nkechi and the Ellenbrook Multicultural Drama Dance team gave a really joyous performance of African song and dance. Nkechi is a force of nature. She has a vibrancy and enthusiasm. It is hard not to just smile when you are in her presence. She is an absolutely wonderful person, deeply committed to her community. Their performance was wonderful. Adhieen Ke Loor from the South Sudanese community performed poetry and dance. The West Swan Bhangra Girls did some traditional Punjabi community dance. The Perth North Tamil School performed traditional Tamil dance. ECOV gave us a traditional Japanese sakura dance to invoke the cherry blossom season. Kinanti Perth gave us a traditional Indonesian dance demonstration. Nadar Toor, a very young Bhangra dancer, performed a fantastic Punjabi dance by herself in this beautiful blue outfit. It was so brave of her to get up there in front of all these people with vitality, and vigour. She was fabulous. Hauruia Community Cultural Group gave us a kapa haka song and dance. The sound of that just resonates through your body. It is really exciting.

The Cook Islands Community's Tua Tokerau Performance Group gave us a drumming and dancing exhibition. There was an absolutely beautiful traditional dance from the Cook Islands by Moesha and Elizabeth Victoria Raveora Mataiti. That was really beautiful. Ellenbrook Secondary College's Eranapukaki Kapa Haka Group is a newly formed group that runs through Ellenbrook Secondary College's specialist performing arts program. The first time I saw it perform was two years ago at Ellenbrook Secondary College performing arts showcase. It brought tears to my eyes. I can tell members that the hard work that goes on into bringing these groups of kids together to express pride in their cultural identity and their Māori identity is just amazing. They were brilliant again. They brought the house down. Bukola Esin did an amazing performance. We had the Chung Wah Association's Chinese dragon dancers; their performance was phenomenal, although they set off these giant glitter canons that ended the performance and I think the clean-up for the majority of the night afterwards was going around picking up the little pieces of glitter, lest we incur the wrath of the City of Swan for littering golden yellow glitter all over its oval, but it was amazing. The noise was fantastic. One of my favourite performances was Bhangra Rulez. If members have ever seen them, they are a group of Indian men who do the most energetic vibrant loud Bhangra. It was the penultimate performance of the evening. Thanks to the neighbours in surrounding Charlottes Vineyard for putting up with what was no doubt quite a lot of noise, but hopefully they came out of their homes and came to see it, because it really was spectacular.

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Around that performance area, which we deliberately set up to be family friendly, we set some chairs up at the front, but then with a whole heap of space so the kids could run around and dance, but we also had a ring of stall holders. Again, one of the criteria for participating was that they needed some sort of multicultural aspect to what they were bringing. We had cultural group stalls set up and also local community groups that added a cultural flavour to the stalls that they set up. We had a mooncake festival stall, which is a Chinese celebration for the end of harvest. Kids could make paper lanterns, which was extraordinarily popular. The Rangoli Kolam art was also a hit with the kids, to make art decorations that are then put on the floor of the entrances of homes to bring good luck and prosperity. The kids were encouraged to make their own artworks. The Perth North Tamil School also set up a stall, so did the Haurua Cultural Group, the Cook Islands community. The Al Noor Arabic Community Language School did a stall that showed people how to wear a hijab, and also had an amazing tea. Every time I go to an Al Noor Arabic Community Language group event, there is this piping hot tea with all these wonderful spices. I do not know what they sweeten it with, but it is addictive—absolutely fabulous. The Sikh Gurudwara had a stall where they taught people how to tie turbans. That was very popular as well, and the Sister Project was there, which is a newly established Ellenbrook women's organisation by our fantastic community member Tracey Cave, which seeks to support culturally and linguistically diverse communities, particularly CALD women. When they migrate or have refugee status they are often without access to cars, have no driver's licences or do not have the ability to drive. The Sister Project exists to connect with those women and offer them friendship and all sorts of things such as training for TAFE and pathways into work. It is just an amazing organisation. They were also fashion and arts stalls. We had Elegant Saris, Halle House of Fashions, Bibik Kebaya, Zahara Designs and HalfCast Designs.

In terms of local community groups that chose to put a multicultural spin on things, Ellenbrook Community chat and Connect ran a traditional games stall. It had the South Korean game of ddakji, the Chinese game of mahjong, which I recently learnt to play and was promptly thrashed by the Hasluck candidate for Labor, Tania Lawrence who absolutely whipped my butt in mahjong; and the Indian game of carrom. The Ellenbrook Men's Shed was there too. Our amazing community radio station 88.5 FM was on site. It was pumping out the tunes and was absolutely fantastic. The Ellenbrook Falcons Hockey Club was there. Obviously, hockey is a very popular sport, particularly in the Indian community. The Ellenbrook Lions turned up with its train. It is Ellenbrook's official only existing train, but the other one is on the way. It dressed the train up in a multicultural theme and it was available to the kids. Bump and Jump Bouncy Castles were also there. As always, in Ellenbrook, there cannot be a community event without a bouncy castle. The kids loved it.

There was an amazing array of food. We had Royal Tarka, Unicone soft serve, East African Coffee, Kulfilicious Indian ice cream, Glow Magic, Hot Jam Donuts, Juice Junkie, The Curry Stand and Warung Ade Indonesian. By the time I got there to eat, all that was left was samosas, but they were great. There were also a lot of service providers and not for profits that do so much in Ellenbrook to support our local communities. Our child and parent centre was there. It plays such a key role in outreaching to mothers and families with very young children, and supporting our CALD families.

CLAN Midland, which, until very recently, I was very honoured to be patron of, but it is a bit of a conflict with my new role. CLAN Midland does so much work in outreach to migrant communities. It was there in force. The Angels Mission was there, and the City of Swan's waste education team was there too. I want to extend a deep, deep thanks to the organising committee, I want to acknowledge them.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms J.J. SHAW: I want to extend a deep and personal thanks to our organising committee. I thank Prabjot Singh from the Sikh community and Robyn Pickrell from Ellenbrook Mile. Robyn is amazing, and Prab and Robyn co-chaired the Ellenbrook Multicultural Community and put so much work into bringing this event together. I thank Aniwa Graham from the Cook Islands community; Chai Chua from the Ellenbrook Asian community; David Karr from the African and Jewish communities and member of the Ellenbrook and Districts Residents and Ratepayers Association; Natasha Sallie the secretary; the staff from my office: Kiani, Denise and John; and from the City of Swan: Helen Pickett-Gale, Jose Cicilamma and Matthew Hunt.

Along the way, we also had significant assistance from Glynn Davies, who is the president of Ellenbrook and Districts Residents and Ratepayers Association, a very new ratepayer association, which I was very pleased to support the establishment of. Please get involved. Rod Simeons, the former principal of Anne Hamersley Primary School, wandered into my office one day last year and said, "Jess, I want to get involved in something", since he has retired, "what can I get involved in?" I said, "Rod, have I got a job for you. Why don't you get involved in the Ellenbrook community festival?" He was right on board with us and gave as much as could. Irene Chong, from the Malaysian Chinese community and Gemma Ben-Ary from Ellenbrook Arts. Ellenbrook Arts was again getting right in there. All those people were not on the organising committee the whole way through, but they certainly put so much effort into again organising this event and really helping us prepare and define our vision.

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In the lead-up on the day, we received incredible support from so many cultural groups; the Sikh community, particularly through the Ellenbrook Punjabi Council; the Hindu community; the Malaysian–Chinese community; the Organisation of African Communities; the Kenyan and South Sudanese societies; the Māori community; the Cook Islands community; the Tamil community; the Arabic communities—and so many more. I thank Minister Buti for coming out and demonstrating his support for the event. I also thank Ellenbrook police for showing their support. I thank my parliamentary colleague Minister Rita Saffioti, the member for West Swan; we share Ellenbrook between us. It was absolutely fabulous to have her support. Hon Lorna Harper, MLC, our upper house representative attended, as did Hon Ayor Makur Chuot, MLC, who is a member for the North Metropolitan Region but lives in Ellenbrook. She is the first African-born member of the Western Australian Parliament and she has a fantastic and remarkable migrant story. Tania Lawrence, our candidate for Hasluck, was also there. I would like to acknowledge the support from the City of Swan, particularly Mayor David Lucas. What a fabulous mayor he is. He is a breath of fresh air for the City of Swan. He is truly a great community leader who demonstrates true leadership, which has been long overdue. Also in attendance were Councillors Patty Jones, Aaron Bowman, Tanya Richardson, Ian Johnson, Charlie Zannino and the chief executive officer of the City of Swan, Jeremy Edwards. I would also like to thank those individuals who demonstrate true leadership in the City of Swan and do all they can to bring us together because that should be every elected representative's primary objective. I acknowledge their support for so many community events like this.

I was very proud to personally sponsor the event, but we also received significant financial assistance from the McGowan Labor government through the Office of Multicultural Interests, Lotterywest and Healthway's LiveLighter. We also received considerable financial support from the City of Swan. I would like to acknowledge other donors of the event: LWP and Ellenbrook Vicinity Centres; Print Local; Esthers Bakery; Australia Asia Business Weekly; Mega Drone, Aerial and Videography Inspection; Big W Ellenbrook; Spotlight Ellenbrook; Bunnings Ellenbrook; Espresso Pump; Pita Pit Ellenbrook; Jim's Termite Control Ellenbrook; and BNI Western Australia in Ellenbrook. A special thanks to Anthony Law and Australia Asia Business Weekly for putting together an absolutely fantastic video showcasing the day, which can be viewed on my Facebook page. I was particularly thrilled to receive an absolutely beautiful painting by Irene Chong that captured the spirit of the day, which I will proudly hang in my office. Thank you, Irene; it is absolutely beautiful.

So many individuals and groups came together on that day and as our first event, it went off without a hitch. Thousands of people turned up. There was so much positivity and vibrancy and never a cross word was spoken. It was great. It goes to show what we can do as a community when we come together in the spirit of harmony. It was our inaugural event. We plan, COVID permitting, to hold another one this year and it will be even bigger and better. If anyone in the Ellenbrook community wants to get involved, I strongly encourage them to do so because we will back for 2022 even bigger and better!

I would like to acknowledge an absolutely outstanding multicultural community in Ellenbrook, which is a fantastic organisation—that is, the Alnoor Arabic School. The Alnoor community school celebrates Arabic culture. It is based in Ellenbrook and it participates in all our community events, such as the Ellenbrook Multicultural Festival and the Multicultural Harmony Walk. I have been to many events that Alnoor supports. There are more than 100 children at the Alnoor Arabic community school from 16 different nationalities. All these children attend the school to develop their Arabic language skills. It is not a religious school at all; rather, it is about expressions of language and culture. It is incredibly positive. Its purposefully non-religious curriculum focuses on reading, writing, speaking and listening and developing cultural understanding between the 16 different nationalities that are represented and more broadly. I have been very privileged to work with Alnoor Arabic community school for a number of years. As a board member of Ellenbrook Secondary College, when Alnoor was looking for a home, a place with purpose-built classrooms, I was very happy to champion its cause and encourage Ellenbrook Secondary College to make classrooms available. Indeed, under the McGowan government's initiatives to make school facilities available to community groups to use, Alnoor Arabic community school is now able to operate out of Ellenbrook Secondary College, which it does on Sundays. That is great. I would like to thank Ellenbrook Secondary College; that is an incredibly generous thing to do. Again, in such a multicultural area it is very important that we make spaces available for CALD community groups to come together.

It was a real pleasure to visit Alnoor community school in August last year following the announcement of the Office of Multicultural Interests' community language school grant of \$14 672 to the Alnoor language school. The OMI community grants program has also given Alnoor \$5 000 for community capacity building. The grants program is specifically intended to provide funding for projects that benefit culturally and linguistically diverse communities, including those from new and emerging communities. Personally, as a member, I would like to contribute a supply of stationery and other learning materials for the Alnoor school. It is absolutely fabulous. I want to thank Alnoor for reaching out to me straightaway when the pandemic hit and offering to distribute whatever information it could in Arabic. It said, "Whatever we can do to do some of the heavy lifting to spread the message about the COVID response, please let us know." Thank you to Alnoor for its assistance in communicating with the wider Arabic community.

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Two weeks ago, I was very privileged to be invited to attend Alnoor's Hijab Heroes event as a panellist alongside Dr Zahraa Al Tameni, Dr Aseel Alkiaat and Fatima Khalil. These women all have incredible stories about empowerment, strength and participation. They are all very successful career women who unashamedly expressed pride in their community and religion. They were proud to wear the hijab. They wanted to speak to the young women at the event about the importance of being true to their values and proud of their culture and where they come from. They wanted the young women to understand that they can do that and still be a very proud member of the Western Australian community. They talked about their many personal and professional achievements. It was really great to hear their stories. They are absolutely fantastic female role models. I am very proud to stand with them in support of tolerance, respect and friendship. We need more of that. I congratulate the young women who attended the ceremony. I am sure there were very many proud and fierce young women in that room who were inspired by the speakers. I have no doubt they will go on to achieve great things for themselves and our community.

Young women and girls have every right to aspire to leadership in their schools, families, workplace, sporting teams, communities and political life. A person's cultural background, ethnicity and religion should not matter. We already have an amazing Muslim woman in federal Parliament in Anne Aly. It is fantastic that Fatima Payman is now running for the Senate and proudly wearing the hijab. We need more of that. We need more women from diverse backgrounds to step forward. I would like to say thank you to Aliyaah Al-Zayadi and her dedicated team of volunteers and educators for the fabulous work that they are doing at the Alnoor community school.

I would like to take this opportunity in the first speech that I deliver for 2022 to pause for a moment to acknowledge the 12-month commemoration of the Wooroloo bushfires. Minister Dawson and I went to Gidgegannup a couple of weeks ago to join the community at an art exhibition commemorating the 12 months. I thank Minister Dawson for his support. I would also like to thank Minister Whitby. He has moved on from the emergency services portfolio but he was an absolute tower of strength for my community and me personally. I would like to acknowledge him for his support. As always, I would like to thank all our volunteer bush fire brigades for their incredible service. They were out there again this summer fighting fires in my local community that were unfortunately deliberately lit. I am sure that everybody in Swan Hills breathed a sigh of relief when the Western Australia Police Force recently announced that it had made an arrest. That process will no doubt run its course. I would like to thank WA police for their outstanding work. I would also like to thank the bush fire brigade up there.

I know that some of the brigade members were genuinely shaken by the arrest of one of their folk, but they should understand that our community knows that the vast, vast majority of them turn out and work so hard for us. I want to acknowledge their efforts and tell them that we all support them incredibly. Thank you.

As always, I would like to thank the volunteer organisations, the City of Swan and the Shire of Mundaring for all their work. I look forward, as I know my whole community does, to the release of the findings of the independent inquiry into the Wooroloo bushfire. As soon as I know more about it, they will too, and I will be as forthcoming as I can with the information that I receive. I know there is much community interest in that.

I would like to acknowledge Dr Ron Edwards for chairing the disaster relief effort. He was absolutely fantastic and, again, was such a support for our community. Dr Edwards, you are just wonderful.

Finally, to the Gidgegannup and Wooroloo communities, your resilience is remarkable, as is your generosity of spirit and your care for one another. It has been a tough 12 months. There is a tough road ahead, but we will get through this. We will do it together. As long as we keep supporting each other in the way we have done, I think there is a bright future ahead.

MS J.L. HANNS (Collie–Preston) [12.40 pm]: I rise in reply to the Premier's Statement, which I watched from my office in Collie. It was a very interesting opportunity to see that address remotely from within Western Australia.

I would like to start by thanking the Premier, on behalf of Collie–Preston residents, for all his incredible hard work, and that of his ministers and this government.

In the Premier's Statement, he posed one question that I have the answer to: where would we rather have been over the last two years and where would we rather be into a challenging future? His answer, and the answer from my family and my constituents in Collie–Preston, is right here in Western Australia. Our government has kept Western Australians safe. We have created local jobs. We have the most robust economy, which is the envy of the Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, and a record unemployment rate of 3.4 per cent. We have a track record of outstanding financial management that stands in stark contrast to that of the previous Liberal–National government.

All of that aside, I am here today to tell the stories of the people I represent, the people who live in the electorate of Collie–Preston, and how the McGowan Labor government is helping our communities and delivering for regional communities in Western Australia. As members will have seen, this week has proved challenging for the people of Collie. I live in Collie and represent the electorate of Collie–Preston, which takes in the local government areas of the Shire of Harvey, the Shire of Collie, the Shire of Donnybrook–Balingup and the Shire of Capel. As

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I said, I live in Collie. These are very challenging times for my community, with local cases arriving for the first time in regional Western Australia.

We heard over the weekend that Allanson Primary School staff, parents and students got news that they were preparing for COVID within their school. It was news that nobody wanted to hear in our community. Allanson Primary School was registered as Western Australia's first regional school to be impacted by COVID. I want to tell members a little bit of a backstory about Allanson Primary School. Allanson Primary School was established in 1913 to cater for children from families involved in the first coalmining and timber-felling operations within the region. Allanson has always been a small school; it is considered to be a bush school. It was threatened with closure in 1984, as enrolments had fallen to approximately eight students. Since 1986, and with the support of the community, Allanson Primary School has grown and now has students from kindergarten to year 6. In 2013, Allanson celebrated its centenary year. From its inception, this incredible school has shown that it is resilient. It has taken on the many challenges it has had over that time, and this particular situation with COVID is just one more.

I would like to say thank you to Simon Paton, the school principal, his staff, parents and students for the work to immediately initiate their COVID safety plan in school and for swinging into action for those affected classrooms the isolation protocols and plans for self-isolation of students and their close contacts. The positive approach that they have taken to this issue in very, very challenging times has been a credit to our community and the school. School staff have already rolled out schooling-in-isolation strategies. I was told about the number of students who have resumed their schooling at home, again supervised by parents. Thank you to the staff at Allanson Primary School: you have demonstrated the ability to activate your careful COVID planning and pivot your programs to ensure that students continue to learn in these difficult circumstances.

I know that members know that I was a teacher prior to being elected as the member for Collie–Preston. I am not biased, but I have to say that school staff across Western Australia outstandingly have demonstrated, and continue to demonstrate, that they are part of a group of people who really are considered to be superheroes who do not wear a cape.

Over the last few days, it has been observed in many other places that COVID has impacted that the local economy has seen an immediate slowdown. In Collie, people are not panicking. They are going about their business in a careful, cautious way, but they are not going out necessarily, as can be seen from the number of people in local businesses, on the streets and just around in the community. They are not spending money in shops and cafes, because people have seen a drop-off in their business turnover as people are being cautious about the community spread in Collie. Business owners, workers and community sports clubs are all feeling the pinch. If a business is shown as an exposure site on the list, my office has been contacted by those business owners and told that business is very slow on the days that they are listed. I understand that people are cautious. I understand that people do not want to be in a position in which they or their families get unwell. But I would absolutely call on our community and all people across Western Australia to support those businesses—those cafes, gyms and community sports clubs—that have been impacted by the effects of COVID within their community.

Our government has worked incredibly hard to try to limit and prevent the spread of COVID, because these are the situations that we did not want to happen—businesses, community sport and livelihoods being impacted by the spread of COVID in the community. We have seen what that looks like in the eastern states and this government is trying to avoid those dire circumstances. We have done so by listening to the health advice and to experts and, in doing so, have limited the devastating impacts of COVID in our community.

Again, I want to refer to the Premier's Statement. He mentioned this government's strong financial management as the reason for this government being able to invest heavily in our health system. I want to highlight the key facts for me from that particular part of the Premier's Statement. Opposition members like to criticise this government on a daily basis about the issue of health, but I would like to remind them of two key facts: Western Australia has the highest per capita spend on public hospitals in Australia, at 13 per cent above the national average; and Western Australia receives from the commonwealth the lowest funding per person for general practitioners. That is very evident in regional communities. Trying to attract doctors to regional communities is already difficult, but given the fact that we have the lowest amount of funding per capita in Western Australia, that presents a whole different set of challenges.

Since the budget, this government has allocated an additional \$3.2 billion to be spent on our health and mental health systems. This is record spending on health in Western Australia. In Collie–Preston, this means initiatives such as a \$200 million upgrade of Bunbury regional hospital, which services many people within my electorate. The Collie Health Service's entire operating theatre will undergo a \$12 million redevelopment to meet the healthcare needs of the residents in our community so that they can access quality health care close to home.

Despite a dire lack of support from the federal government for the vaccine rollout, the McGowan Labor government has got on with the job of rolling out COVID-19 vaccinations across Western Australia. I have said previously that

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Allanson Primary School in Collie was the first regional school to experience COVID cases, but Collie has recently had another first.

Phillip Ugle is an emerging Aboriginal leader in Collie. He is young, fit, healthy and an Aboriginal healthcare worker in our local hospital. He keeps fit by going to the gym several times a week, so he assures me; but Phillip has also been named a first in our community. Phillip was told by the Department of Health that he was the first Aboriginal person in Western Australia to contract COVID. In his words, several weeks ago he went to the wrong nightclub on the wrong day at the wrong time. Because he works in health care, he was tripled-vaxxed. He is grateful for vaccine mandates in the health system and right throughout our community. He wants me to tell everyone that any talk of Omicron being mild or no worse than a cold or flu is absolute nonsense. Despite his good health, he contracted COVID at that nightclub on the wrong day at the wrong time and got sick. What followed was time in isolation, and stress and worry about whether he had made any of his vulnerable family members sick. Phillip's illness progressed and his health deteriorated quickly. His extremities and lips turned blue; unbeknownst to him his lungs had filled with fluid. His chest became so inflamed that he thought he was having a heart attack. Phillip is in his 30s. Phillip was transported by ambulance from isolation to Bunbury Hospital at South West Health Campus for emergency treatment. It was here that he discovered his lungs were so full of fluid that they were compressing each other in his chest, giving him acute chest pain and mimicking the symptoms of a heart attack. The good news is that Phillip recovered from COVID, but he still has ongoing health effects. He has not been able to return to the gym or do any exercise. Doctors tell him his symptoms will disappear, but it is a waiting game.

Phillip asked me to give all Western Australians a clear message: he does not know what would have happened to him had he not been triple-vaxxed. But he does know that it stopped him passing on COVID to his vulnerable family members. He is calling on Aboriginal people across Western Australia to get triple-vaxxed and to save their lives and their culture. He is proud to share his story and I am absolutely privileged to speak on his behalf today. He wants to be part of driving up vaccination rates in Aboriginal communities. People in regional Western Australia overwhelming do not want COVID in their communities.

Over the summer break a number of my staff and I assisted people to install the ServiceWA app. I also note that a number of local government community libraries are also doing incredible work to assist people to install this app so that they can return to their day-to-day lives and, obviously, adhere to proof of vaccination requirements by making things as simple as possible. My staff and I visited retirement villages. We ran drop-in clinics and assisted hundreds of people set up the app. The people we helped could not wait to get set up so that they could go on enjoying the things that they do. One resident we helped is a member of Hot Chicks. The membership of this women's group is based on the fact that they have all had radiation treatment for cancer. This group of women support a local cafe and they love their catch-ups. They are able to continue to support each other through their cancer journey knowing that they share the cafe with people who are vaccinated and are doing their bit to keep them safe, given that they are immunocompromised.

After talking to these people I was starkly reminded that we do not know how many people in our community are vulnerable to underlying health conditions. People like me, without an underlying health condition, are the lucky ones. How can we tell which people in our community are dealing with underlying health conditions? Is it a neighbour on kidney dialysis, a cafe worker with cerebral palsy, an elderly person in a nursing home, someone undergoing chemotherapy or radiation treatment, or, like a workman who recently came to my house, someone who had had his spleen removed as a result of a serious accident? I had to google what a spleen does within the body because I am not a doctor or a paramedic, unlike the Acting Speaker (Mrs L.A. Munday). Importantly, the spleen houses white blood cells and, obviously, helps to fight infections in the blood stream. I then understood why that workman was so supportive of vaccination and all the things that this government has been doing to support him and his family members. These people understand and appreciate the work that this government is doing to keep them safe. They understand the importance of using the ServiceWA app to help contact tracers do their work and help to slow the spread of COVID in Western Australia.

I will move on to education and training. My home electorate of Collie-Preston has three public senior high schools: Australind Senior High School, Collie Senior High School and Eaton Community College. It is also home to another public school—that is, Donnybrook District High School. Donnybrook District High School is a district high school and after year 10, students go to other schools within the area. As part of the government's commitment to quality public education in Western Australia, these schools have already completed or are receiving significant infrastructure upgrades.

Australind Senior High School has commenced planning and initial works on a much-needed \$15 million upgrade to its facilities. The school will benefit from a new classroom block, specialist workshop and cutting-edge STEM classroom. The school's dental therapy centre will be relocated to a nearby primary school, which means that other people in the community will be able to access that service readily. Australind Senior High School is the south

Dr David Honey; Ms Mia Davies; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Shane Love; Acting Speaker; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Geoff Baker; Mr Hugh Jones; Ms Jessica Shaw; Ms Jodie Hanns

west's largest public high school with enrolments of 1 400 students, and it is growing. Thank you to the Minister for Education and Training, Hon Sue Ellery, for her support for this long-anticipated and much-needed project for the Australind community. I also thank the principal Mr Domenic Camera and Julie Beelitz, the school board chair, for their advocacy on this project for their community. I look forward to working with them all to deliver this much-needed infrastructure upgrade in the future.

Eaton Community College will also receive a funding boost to construct a new design and technology centre, which builds on its previous science upgrades. Collie Senior High School continues to enjoy the \$7.5 million for upgrades it received as part of election commitments from this government in 2017. Donnybrook District High School will also receive \$1 million to spend on upgrades. Although I am talking about bricks and mortar in our local schools, I highlight the other major investment this government continues to make in the education sector—that is, investing in quality teachers and quality education across the regions.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms J.L. HANNS: Regional schools often contend with the challenge of parents seeking alternative schools for children in the secondary years. The idea that moving to the city or sending their kids to private schools will provide a better education is being challenged by schools within my electorate of Collie–Preston. Alister Herrmann, a year 12 student in 2021 at Eaton Community College, achieved an ATAR score of 99.95, the highest possible score for any student across Australia studying ATAR courses. Jaxon Brown and Tyler Cooper, year 12 students in 2021 at Australind Senior High School, achieved ATAR scores of 99 and 98.5 respectively. Locchie Stallard, a Collie Senior High School student, received an ATAR score of over 90—he is modest, so I will not give you the exact figure.

I would like to highlight another incredible young person I came across last year at the year 6 graduation at Capel Primary School. There is a young lady at Capel Primary School called Zoe who decided that she would teach all her school how to sing and sign *Advance Australia Fair* using Auslan. It was an incredible sight to see the entire school participate in that project. I offered to see whether I could possibly get Zoe to come to Parliament one day and meet our wonderful Fiona, the Premier's Auslan interpreter.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 407.]

Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm