

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 14 October 2020]

p6803c-6812a

Speaker; Mr Shane Love; Dr David Honey; Mr Dean Nalder; Mr Ian Blayney; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Ben Wyatt;
Hon Fran Logan; Mr Dave Kelly; Ms Rita Saffioti

**WATER, POWER AND EMERGENCY SERVICES — REGIONAL WA —
2020–21 STATE BUDGET**

Matter of Public Interest

THE SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson) informed the Assembly that he was in receipt within the prescribed time of a letter from the member for Moore seeking to debate a matter of public interest.

[In compliance with standing orders, at least five members rose in their places.]

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Nationals WA) [3.01 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the ongoing failure of the Labor government to prioritise critical water, power and emergency service deficiencies impacting regional WA despite a forecast \$1.2 billion budget surplus in 2020–21 and the ongoing dismantling of royalties for regions.

We know that the budget has confirmed what regional WA has always known—that royalties for regions is all but dead. Of the \$4.2 billion royalties for regions program, \$2.7 billion will be washed out or underspent by this Labor government. There is \$1.7 billion of cost substituted to royalties for regions that should be part of normal government expenditure, with another \$1 billion to be underspent over that same period.

Surpluses of \$1.7 billion last year and \$1.2 billion this year come on the back of substantial increases in royalties and the grave of royalties for regions. There is no sound moral or financial standing to continue paying for government deliverables such as water from the royalties for regions program. Despite regional WA being the pillar of economic strength and the hope for the whole nation for economic recovery, Labor continues to rip money out of the regions to pay for projects and commitments in the metropolitan area. The government is lavishing \$5.685 billion on Metronet, and it is even raiding royalties for regions to pay for some minor parts of that. How is this one for a kick for regional people? A total of \$20 million will be spent to shift Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development workers from South Perth to the CBD. Why are we not shifting them to the regions that they hope to serve?

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Why is the member for Bunbury not calling for that? Why is he not calling for more staff to be sent to Bunbury? Why? It is because he is powerless. He is one voice in a caucus room full of metropolitan members. We do not see the member for Collie–Preston calling for the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development to be sent to Collie, either.

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: The government is missing the opportunity to —

Point of Order

Dr D.J. HONEY: The member for Moore is having to put up with a constant stream of interjections from the Minister for Water.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms S.E. Winton): Thank you, member for Cottesloe. That is not a point of order.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Yes, it is!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Through the Chair, member for Moore—that might be helpful.

Debate Resumed

Mr R.S. LOVE: Okay. Thanks, Acting Speaker; perhaps if I could talk —

Mr D.T. Punch interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Bunbury!

Mr R.S. LOVE: As we know, \$20 million is being spent to shift DPIRD workers from South Perth to an office block in Perth. That is \$20 million down the drain. It is nice to have projects built around Perth, such as the \$50 million Swan River cycle bridge. I cycled over the Causeway the other day. There is nothing wrong with it; it is fine. We do not need another bridge over the Swan River at that point. It is a nice-to-have, not a need-to-have. We have the eSports stadium and the East Perth power station redevelopment, which is being subsidised to the tune of \$20 million. The government is even spending \$2.7 million on spin doctors for its COVID-19 media unit. Meanwhile in regional WA, there are kids at Hedland Senior High School, which is crumbling around their ears; a hospital in Meekatharra that is a disgrace; midwest communities without adequate emergency response, which the member for Geraldton will be talking about; and great southern communities running out of water due to a lack of investment in water infrastructure and a lack of care about what happens in those communities, which I am sure the member for Roe will enlighten members about.

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This government seeks to pull funds from the only regional development program that we have in this state. Midwestern wheatbelt communities in my electorate of Moore have to put up with a Third World power infrastructure. Sometimes communities without that structure are located very close to massive generators of power. My electorate is now one of the great generators of power in this state through the solar and wind investments that have been made in that area. Only about a week ago, I was up at Warradarge for the opening of the latest huge wind farm in the electorate, yet the people of the electorate swelter through summer because there is no power to their houses. They are not nice-to-have things, like we are talking about in Perth. They are things people need to have.

The Premier trots out the line that the Nationals WA are divisive—that the Nationals seek to make a division between the city and the regions. I would say that it is not the Nationals who are making that division; it is the Premier and his government making that division when they seek to neglect the regions and we see a budget with a massive surplus and billions stripped out of the royalties for regions program, yet no investment is made to correct those issues that I have just spoken about.

We know from the very first budget of this government that it set about to attack the regions. We know that it set about to attack the education of our kids and we know the reaction of the communities throughout regional WA to that atrocious attack on things such as the Schools of the Air and the closure of Moora Residential College. I note an onlooker here who was encouraging the closure of that college. I think that was terrible situation. Luckily, we know that it is being rebuilt and it has been very successful, and it is an example of what needs to happen in our regions to ensure that the regions can be strong and they can thrive. It is not being rebuilt on the back of any investment by this state government; it is being rebuilt because the federal coalition government put up the money to make that very vital investment in my electorate.

As I said, communities throughout the electorate of Moore swelter through not hours or minutes of power outages, but days, and sometimes up to a week, without power. This is unacceptable. The government is in a situation now in which it could make a difference. It could make the type of investments that the member for Riverton made. He is not here, but when he was Minister for Energy, he listened to a concern I had about the community at Kalbarri. He put in place a program for the development of a microgrid. The program was going along really well. There was going to be a battery, and a consortium of people were looking at putting in local generation through solar power to charge the battery. This government then came in and we saw the project more or less halved in value. We are still getting the battery, but there is not the local generation to charge the battery. When those communities are looking at four to five days without power, as happens regularly in the midwest under this government and the previous government, that battery will last a few hours, then it will run out of power and the power will go out for days, again, because the generating capacity has not been placed there as part of the program.

In my electorate, people in numerous communities are facing similar challenges. At the moment, the worst is happening in Mullewa, but in other places such as Port Denison, Dongara, Lancelin, Horrocks, Cervantes, Dalwallinu and Bindoon, to name a few, people are facing very real challenges and suffering through horrendous power outages. Just a short while ago, on 10 September, I made a grievance to the Minister for Energy about power supplies in my electorate. I spoke about the residents of Springfield, near Dongara, who lost their power supply from 4.34 am on Sunday, 24 May, through to 5.35 pm on Thursday, 28 May. The people of that community were without power for 109 hours—people who are dependent on power to pump water to provide water in their houses. Unfortunately, this was not an isolated incident in that area. We know that unreliable power supply has been occurring for a long time in the Dongara and Port Denison area, where Springfield is located. Regularly, there are between 10 and 20 outages a year in that area and it seems as though the power situation is only getting worse.

Western Power figures confirm that in 2019, Mullewa's power reliability had, in fact, deteriorated over the previous two years. The average disruption index for the preceding 14 months was 3 957 minutes against the service standard of 848 minutes, which is six times higher than the target set by Western Power. Western Power has been investing in community batteries. I am indebted to the member for Warren–Blackwood, the Nationals WA energy spokesperson, who has been relentless in seeking information about those batteries. He has found that the batteries that are put in to reinforce the grid have been going into places such as Mandurah, Falcon, Ellenbrook, Two Rocks, Wanneroo, Canning Vale, Port Kennedy, Yokine and Parmelia. One is going into Boulder and one is going into Vasse, and I suppose that is because they are large regional communities. The economic rationale behind Western Power making that investment is based purely on return to Western Power for making that investment. In answer to a question from the member for Warren–Blackwood on 8 October, the minister stated —

Western Power is also continuing to investigate other opportunities for microgrids similar to the one currently being constructed in Kalbarri and Perenjori for regional Western Australia. However, the financial value of improved reliability may be insufficient for the ERA to allow Western Power to fully recover the cost of these investments.

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Those investments rely on the ERA finding that they are value for money when stacked against state criteria. Mullewa is being stacked against Ellenbrook. Guess who is not going to win that argument? Programs like royalties for regions exist so that we can overcome these hurdles and make sure that regional communities are able to have the basic necessities of life. They are not getting that at the moment.

The \$1.2 billion budget surplus that has been forecast for this year would have been an excellent opportunity to show concern for the people of the midwest. The government could have made some forward-thinking investments, beyond what the ERA requires of Western Power. The whole of government could have said, “We’re going to make this investment. We’re going to put money in and we’re going to make it work. We are not going to leave the communities of the midwest without power for days and days and days.” People should not have to feel as though they have to leave a town and a community because the power supply is so poor and their quality of life is so badly affected. When that happens, the local shop shuts, the local service station shuts and the local doctor shuts down, and people go to larger communities where there is power and services and do not come back to shop locally ever again. This is killing our towns. The government needs to make these investments. It needs to wake up to what is going on around it. It needs to stop being so concerned about what is nice to have and start spending some money on things that are needed in the regions.

MR D.C. NALDER (Bateman) [3.13 pm]: I stand in support of the Nationals WA motion today and reinforce something that I stated yesterday in my speech in reply to the appropriation bills—this government has been lucky with the windfall iron ore and GST gains and sneaky with the manipulation of financial data to manufacture surplus outcomes, and has failed to prepare for the economic future of Western Australia.

I will focus on “sneaky with the manipulation of financial data”. This motion strikes at the heart of what the government has done with royalties for regions. Picking up on the member for Moore’s points, we have seen cost shifting by this government, such that 64 per cent of the royalties for regions program is being used to fund expense line items that historically have been funded out of the consolidated account. That shifts billions of dollars from the consolidated account into royalties for regions as a cost-shifting exercise. This strips money out of regional Western Australia—make no mistake about that. I believe that if we look into certain regions, particularly the wheatbelt and the great southern, we would see that those regions have lost millions of dollars that potentially could have gone to them under royalties for regions programs that are no longer available because of expenses that would have been historically funded out of the consolidated account. This is about being sneaky, because on the one hand the government is spruiking and putting spin out there on how much money it is spending in Western Australia, when in reality a large percentage of royalties for regions is funding stuff that should be, and historically was, funded out of the consolidated account.

When we cross over and look at certain aspects of this, there is no question that this government is picking winners. We do not have to look far in the budget papers and at royalties for regions spending to see that the government has its favourite seats—seats that it holds in regional Western Australia are being looked after. If members look at the line items for Collie, they will see an unbelievable amount of royalties for regions, tens of millions of dollars, being spent in Collie, a seat that is currently held by Labor. The government is trying to pick a winner for an election that has nothing to do with the long-term interests of regional Western Australia other than the midyear electoral advantage of the Labor government of Western Australia. What a disgrace!

Mr D.T. Punch interjected.

Mr D.C. NALDER: We are seeing the same thing occur in the member for Bunbury’s electorate.

Mr D.T. Punch interjected.

Mr D.C. NALDER: The member for Bunbury can chirp away. He has been looked after by his government, but money has not been spread fairly across regional Western Australia or on the appropriate long-term needs in regional Western Australia. It is difficult to say anything other than regional Western Australians should put WA Labor last.

Several members interjected.

Mr D.C. NALDER: There has been a lack of investment in electricity assets in regional Western Australia by the Labor government. People in regional Western Australia are paying an extraordinary amount of money for electricity. Western Australia has the second highest electricity charges in Australia and has had the largest increase of any state in Australia over the last three and a half years, all courtesy of the WA Labor government. This is why people in regional Western Australia are unhappy with this government, and they should continue to be unhappy. That is why I stand in support of this motion today.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you. Member for Geraldton.

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Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you.

Mr D.T. Punch interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Bunbury!

Mr D.C. Nalder interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Bateman, you are not being helpful. The member for Geraldton is on his feet.

MR I.C. BLAYNEY (Geraldton) [3.18 pm]: I want to talk briefly about the proposed midwest rescue helicopter that the community had hoped would be included this year's budget. It is a classic royalties for regions project, but, unfortunately, it did not make the grade in the budget. The chopper would cover the area around Geraldton, south to Badgingarra and north to Shark Bay, and west to the Abrolhos Islands and east to Mt Magnet. The population of the midwest is only 60 000; however, two very busy roads run through the midwest: North West Coastal Highway and highway 95, which runs north to Meekatharra, Newman and Port Hedland. The southern group of the Abrolhos Islands does not have an airstrip, so it is quite a vulnerable place. In the future we expect to see quite a lot more people over there due to the development of aquaculture and tourism. The project was originally brought to us by the community after the death of a seaman who could not be taken off the ship he was on and subsequently passed away before being taken off the ship.

I want to talk about a recent event in the Murchison when a group of people were riding motorbikes through the Murchison, the midwest, the Gascoyne and the Pilbara. They were on the unsealed New Forest–Yallalong Road about 180 kays east of the Galena Bridge, when one of them hit a kangaroo at 10.30 in the morning of 19 September. When the others stopped and looked at the injured rider, they discovered that he was in pretty bad shape. Fortunately, one of the group was a nurse and provided first aid. The group was quite well equipped; they had an emergency position indicating radio beacon, which they deployed immediately. This happened at 10.30 in the morning. By 12.10 pm, the rider was in a helicopter. The nurse flew with him to Geraldton where he was assessed and the Royal Flying Doctor Service flew him to Royal Perth Hospital. It just so happened that the helicopter that took him to Geraldton was in the midwest for an Army training exercise. The local police considered that he probably owes his life to the fact that the helicopter was available and was able to get medical care within a few hours. In the medical profession they talk about the “golden hour”. If a person can be taken to a hospital within an hour of an accident, their survival rate is, I think, about 30 per cent higher than otherwise, and they have far fewer complications. Had the helicopter not been available for this motorcycle rider, who was probably four or five hours away from Geraldton by road, it is expected that he probably would not have made it. I think it underlines how useful and effective a helicopter can be and how it would bring another mantle of safety to people who both live in the midwest and pass through the midwest. I would like to acknowledge the work of the police and the Army in making the helicopter available. I will paraphrase someone else and say, “Well may you say Wander Out Yonder, but I'd say be prepared.” The way we will be prepared is by having available a midwest rescue helicopter.

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe) [3.22 pm]: I rise also to support the member for Moore's excellent motion today. Can I start by, firstly, reiterating what the member for Moore and the member for Bateman have said about royalties for regions. The \$2.7 billion is between a cost shift and an underspend over the forward estimates. I think people forget that 23 per cent of the population of Western Australia are from the regions, and 25 per cent of royalties, in the form of the royalties for regions program, is not a bad thing. That is what people forget; it is proportionate to the population.

We talk about many government members not going over the Darling Scarp. The Premier accuses us of creating the regional divide, but it is a real thing. I remember talking to several Labor members at the Dog Rock Motel in Albany only a couple of years ago. They marvelled at the fresh air and admitted that they had never been south of Armadale. That is a perfect example of what I am talking about.

Can I reiterate that Hedland Senior High School is in a terrible state. I cannot believe that we have not seen any support for it in the budget. The government is relying on some sort of BHP royalties deal to fix up that one. The one that really upsets me is the Bunbury waterfront, because the previous government had it all set up to decentralise what is now the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. There could have been hundreds of workers in Bunbury but no, the government pulled the rug out from that proposal and said it will invest in the \$78 million Bunbury waterfront. I agree with the member for Bateman that people who happen to live in Bunbury, Collie or Port Hedland have done pretty well in this state budget but those who live anywhere else are in strife. It is very much about the coming election.

Finally, another thing that upsets me is in the likes of Northam, which Hon Darren West represents, and where many people could be decentralised. In Katanning there are plenty of laboratories and there is plenty of room but,

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no, the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development is to be located in the CBD, so I scratch my head at that one.

I would now like to move on to the issue of water. I am somewhat disappointed with the Minister for Water's response to my question today. Time and again the minister has asked us to talk to our federal colleagues about whether we can get some more federal money to help our farmers in our agriculture sector and to help with the farm water rebate scheme. Today the minister asked me whether I thought we should get a couple of million dollars out the door. I fully agree with that. I have absolutely no doubt about those 411 applicants with the \$2 million outstanding. I am very much in support of the minister agreeing to get that money out the door for those who have already spent the money on their water infrastructure. As I said, many a time when we have asked the minister about the farm water rebate scheme and the like, he has come back with two things: first, the climate is the drying—climate change is happening; and, second, we need to talk to our federal colleagues. The minister has talked about the Murray–Darling scheme. That has been his answer to the farm water rebate question. He has talked about our federal colleagues and the Murray–Darling scheme. Here is the minister's opportunity. Federal minister Keith Pitt has put out \$50 million to be spent right around Australia. That is a great opportunity for the minister to grab some of that for our WA farmers and improve the criteria. I have written a letter to the minister suggesting improvements to the criteria, including roaded catchments and the like so that we can catch some water as well as clean out dams, pipes and tanks and the other things it is available for. I am certainly calling on the minister to match the federal funding. I heard minister Keith Pitt on *Country Hour* only a couple of weeks ago saying that he was happy to put out that money, but given water is a state responsibility, it is time the states put their hand in their pocket. When the Treasurer has a \$1.2 billion surplus, I cannot see how he can tell the farmers of Jerramungup, Ravensthorpe, Lake Grace and Newdegate, "Look I'm sorry about this; I can't match that funding; therefore, you will also lose the federal funding because I can't find room for it out of my \$1.2 billion surplus."

I want to go over some things that have happened over the last three or four years that I have found quite disappointing. I will start with some of the items I think farmers and members of our community have put out on which we need to focus. Firstly, the strategic dams is a great one. Noel Bairstow is out there working in a bipartisan way with all sides of politics looking at strategic dams. I have spoken about roaded catchments, which I think is a very important element and I would like the minister to support me on this in seeking the grants from the federal minister.

Desalination is an option. When I look at the likes of Cascade and Salmon Gums near Esperance, we need to look at a potential desalination option somewhere down the track to supply not only the farming communities but, potentially, also to take pressure off the goldfields system. The other issue I would like to mention is underground water and the Beaufort paleochannel, a great source of water that I think needs to be mapped out more by the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation. Another one for which Barry Hall has commitments from the Shire of Dumbleyung is the Kukerin dam, but we are not getting any support from our water minister. We lose two metres of water a year in evaporation from our farm dams. These are the sorts of projects that need support from the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, the Water Corporation and our minister. I congratulate the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, Tracy Calvert and people like her who have been working hard over the summer. I know that the minister spent \$3 million carting water, because 10 of the 12 water deficient areas are in the electorate of Roe, so I know only too well about it. I congratulate, in a positive sense, Tracy Calvert and her team for the work that they have done, but now the minister needs to take the next step and support more infrastructure.

I am also worried about our sheep flock. We are getting down around 12-odd million sheep and if we do not have water supply for that stock, farmers will take the easy option and go on to cropping if it is too hard and there is no support from the government. Rather than having to make all those farm improvements on their own, they will go on to cropping, which is the easy option. We then lose people out of our regional communities and it goes on from there.

One of the most devastating things for our regional communities was the closure of standpipes in Lake Grace in 2018–19 with no notice. The devastating thing on top of that, which really frustrated everyone in our region, was that a 25-millimetre pipe out of the water system was \$2.50 a kilolitre but if someone wanted an 80-millimetre pipe, they would have to pay \$8.50 a kilolitre. That is over three times the cost for the same water out of the same pipe. It is quite unbelievable. I am worried about our firefighting capacity. I am worried about our stock water. I am worried about our spray water. I think the minister needs to switch on to the requirements. We have a great opportunity with our federal money. Switch on!

MR B.S. WYATT (Victoria Park — Treasurer) [3.32 pm]: I acknowledge the presence in the chamber of the only working farmer in the Parliament—Hon Darren West, who has come down from the heady heights in the upper house to watch. He is the only working farmer in the Parliament of Western Australia. He spent the weekend on his tractor baling hay. That is what he did. I know my friends in the Nationals WA know about that because they sit in Subiaco and watch *Landline*. They have seen it happen before. They ride around inner-city Perth on those cycling tracks, built by the Minister for Transport, furious that they cannot ride outside of the area where they live in inner-city Perth.

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The reason they are called the “CAT bus Nats” is they all live on the CAT bus route—unlike Hon Darren West, of course, who is the only working farmer in the Parliament of Western Australia.

Most of us, I suspect, have spent some time living in regional Western Australia. I was in regional WA until I was in year 5. Most of my time has been spent in metropolitan Perth, undoubtedly, but my father spent the majority of his life in regional WA. I have spent 20 per cent of my time living in regional WA and what irritates me the most is this divisive rhetoric that comes from the National Party every single time. This whole idea that metropolitan Perth is out to get regional WA and that regional WA is ignored at all times—it drives me up the wall. The simple fact is even when we put into the budget a record spend on regional infrastructure—\$7.5 billion—we get nothing but complaints from the “CAT bus Nats”. The point I make is this: They focus on royalties for regions. Lift your eyes! Of that \$7.5 billion, how much is from royalties for regions? About nine per cent of that \$7.5 billion in infrastructure and spend in regional WA is from royalties for regions. Why is that? It is because the WA Labor government, under Mark McGowan, understands that we actually have to spend in regional WA from the consolidated account, from the utilities and from other areas.

Under the former government, the general government sector withdrew from the regional spend and it was shoved into royalties for regions. That is why under this government, we have record spend in regional Western Australia because we understand the priorities and the importance of investing in regional WA. I am stunned that the first issue that is raised in complaint by the member for Moore—the perpetual complainer—is that the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development offices did not move to regional Western Australia. For heaven’s sake! By way of aside, the DPIRD office is sometimes in my electorate; sometimes in the member for South Perth’s electorate. It is right on the boundary. It has been in and out. It was utterly ignored for at least 15 years. When I was elected in 2006, it was in dire need of an upgrade. During the eight and a half years of the former government, under royalties for regions, not one dot was spent on it. The money that was actually put into the budget was taken out, and I can certainly tell members that at no point did the former government even consider moving it to regional Western Australia.

Therefore, when I became the Treasurer, one of the great black holes in the budget was the agriculture department. Its budget fell off a cliff. We had to reinject \$130 million into the agricultural department; otherwise, scientists and agricultural workers were going to have to be sacked. That was the outcome. That was what the National Party left this government when I came in. It was the biggest black hole I had.

Mr M.P. Murray: Minister, and they had already taken 140 jobs out of that department.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Correct. Of those 140 jobs that went from the agricultural department, 70 per cent were in regional Western Australia.

Let us look at the record. When we are talking about creating opportunities for a government in investment, the National Party slashed jobs in the agricultural department across regional WA—and it had a plan to do even more. We said no. Not only did we backfill that \$130 million, we also put another \$40 million into grain research, which was an important thing to do for our wheatbelt and great southern areas. But this whole bleat about moving from Kensington into the city, as though that is it, is just outrageous. That was the first thing I had to do as Treasurer.

I note the complaints around water from the member for Roe. Understand this, member for Roe—Minister for Water, correct me if I am wrong—the member for Cottesloe gets up and complains about the way water is charged in metropolitan Perth. Just so we know, it has been like this for 20 years, is it not?

Mr D.J. Kelly: At least.

Mr B.S. WYATT: For at least 20 years, this is how we have charged for water in Western Australia. If the Liberal Party is going to do what the member for Cottesloe is demanding, the water bills for regional Western Australians will go up dramatically.

Mr D.J. Kelly: Yes.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Thank you, Minister for Water. Water bills will go up dramatically because that country subsidy is paid for by metropolitan water users. If the Nationals support the Liberal Party, that is what regional Western Australians can look forward to—otherwise all the complaints in here are just air and gas.

The shadow Treasurer, who has gone, complained about how royalties for regions is allocated. There has been only one member in this place that said that royalties for regions will not exist if it comes back into government, and that was the member for Riverton when he was Leader of the Opposition. I have not seen any change in that position.

I want to get on record in this debate what was said by the shadow Minister for Finance in the other place, Hon Dr Steve Thomas, a man who lives in regional Western Australia. I think he understands about royalties for regions. This is what he said on Monday, 12 October on ABC’s regional *Drive* —

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Under the previous government ... there was \$7 billion roughly spent and a lot of that was great expenditure, you know, there's probably \$5 billion worth of really good expenditure that has transformed regional Western Australia but there's a couple of billion dollars that probably could've been better spent and I'm simply saying that better rules would actually reduce that wastage.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas is right. It is not just me critiquing what the opposition did when it sat on this side of the chamber. That is why our spend in regional Western Australia has done two things: it has gone up, and it has got better, because that is what we committed to do. Indeed, Kyran O'Donnell, the member for Kalgoorlie—another one of the few conservative regional members—said back in 2018 that royalties for regions, and what has occurred, financially wise, needs to be revamped. He also said —

“... You can't just keep having a slush fund of a billion dollars out and debt going up and up ...

He said that is what happened. He said that we have got to have money utilised properly and not thrown out and next minute it is closed. This is not a Labor member of Parliament saying this; this is the conservative opposition. That is why royalties for regions is not just a slush fund of the Nationals WA, as it was under the former government, and why it ignored agriculture and agricultural workers in regional Western Australia. That is why, under us, of the \$7.5 billion infrastructure spend in regional Western Australia, less than 10 per cent comes from royalties for regions. Why? It is because the broader balance sheet of the state should also be spending in regional Western Australia, and we do, and we will continue to do so in a way that is much more effective—as identified by Hon Dr Steve Thomas and Kyran O'Donnell—than the former government was.

I will make one final point before I sit down and allow my colleagues to speak. One area that never saw opportunities for royalties for regions was essential services for remote Aboriginal communities. When they were withdrawn by the former commonwealth government, Colin Barnett stood in this place and said, “Bad luck, we're closing them down.” He did not say, “We're using royalties for regions to fund those essential services for people living in regional and remote Western Australia”; he said, “We're closing them down.” No way are we on this side of the house going to cop that, which is why those services are funded across the forward estimates, quite rightly, by royalties for regions.

MR F.M. LOGAN (Cockburn — Minister for Emergency Services) [3.41 pm]: Let us cast our minds back a little while to what was spent from royalties for regions on some of the issues that have been raised by Nationals WA members today. How much money was spent on electricity from royalties for regions under the previous Barnett Liberal–National government? Nothing. How much was spent on helicopters, which the member for Geraldton just mentioned, from royalties for regions by the previous Barnett Liberal–National government? Nothing. How much was spent on water from royalties for regions by the previous Barnett Liberal–National government? Nothing. How much was spent —

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Moore!

Mr F.M. LOGAN: How much was spent on roads from royalties for regions by the previous Barnett Liberal–National government?

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you! Member for Moore, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: How much was spent on roads from royalties for regions by the previous Liberal–National government? Nothing. We raised it in here —

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Moore, I call you to order for the second time. I gave you cover.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: We raised it in opposition in this chamber over and over again.

Point of Order

Mr R.S. LOVE: The minister is making statements that are clearly factually incorrect, and I am seeking to correct the record. I do not think you should be calling me for correcting him.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms S.E. Winton): Thank you, member for Moore. That is not a point of order.

Debate Resumed

Mr F.M. LOGAN: That is the track record of the whingeing Nationals who come in here. Who sold off until 2035 the freight lines that serviced all the farmers out there? Who sold them off? Who was the minister? It was a National Party minister who drove a stake into the heart of wheatbelt farmers who now cannot get their grain to market on trains. It was the member for Moore's party that did that. He should hang his head in shame. Who then allowed Brookfield Rail, as it was known then, to close down the tier 3 lines in 2012? Who was in government? It

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was the Leader of the National Party. Who was in cabinet? It was the National Party. The member sat there and did nothing. He sold his own farming base, and he knows —

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Moore. I am calling you to order for the third time.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: He sold his own farming base down the drain; that is what he did, yet he has the audacity to come in here and criticise our government, which is spending record amounts of money in the bush. That is honestly disgraceful.

Before I address the issue of the helicopter raised by the member for Geraldton, I advise the house that just this weekend I opened five new bush fire brigade facilities in Western Australia, on Saturday and Monday. The member for Roe knows all about this because three of them are in his electorate—one at Quarry Road, just outside Esperance; one at Howick, which is an hour east of Esperance; and one at Coomalbidgup, about three quarters of an hour west of Esperance, and which has been banging on for a facility out there for the last 40 years, and we delivered it to them. The member for Roe should not come in here and say that we have never gone further south than Margaret River. I was all over his electorate over the weekend, and he was not. I know his rep was there, but he was not. I put this to the member for Roe: has he ever been up to Coondle or Morangup?

Mr P.J. Rundle: Not recently.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: No. Does he know where they are? No, he does not know where they are. This is the boy from the bush! That is probably because he has never been north of the Swan River and had a look at some of the other areas of country WA—one of the places represented by his mate the member for Moore!

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister!

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Just making a point.

There were two new bush fire brigade facilities opened around Toodyay: one in the member for Moore's electorate at Coondle, near the Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd silos —

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Yes. The other was at Morangup. Is that in the member's electorate as well? I thought it was in Swan. Anyway, two of them in the member's electorate. Those are just two examples from this weekend—\$2 million worth of facilities put into regional WA, just this weekend.

I will quickly run through the list of projects from our COVID recovery stimulus package—again, part of the \$5.5 billion WA recovery plan, referred to in cabinet as well. I will give members the locations of these projects for the volunteer fire and rescue services and the volunteer fire and emergency services: Augusta, Boyup Brook, Brookton, Wagin, Kellerberrin, Tammin, Exmouth, Eucla, Dongara, Karratha, South Hedland, Yanchep and Waroona. For the bush fire service facilities: Torbay, Baandee, Mt Caroline, Kellerberrin North, Nungarin, Julimar, Allanson, Dardanup Central, Harris River, Hester Brook and Wellington Mills. It does not sound like there were too many places in metropolitan Perth, does it? Every single one of those investments in upgrades and recovery spending is in regional WA. Members of the Nationals WA come in here and criticise our government for not spending any money in regional Western Australia, but those are examples of just emergency services.

The member for Geraldton referred to the helicopter. In January–February 2017, a proposition was put to the member's government for a helicopter for an emergency rescue helicopter service in Geraldton, and it never picked it up or put it forward as an election commitment. Let me explain to the member what his party has promised about that helicopter for Geraldton. We are going around in circles. Does the member remember the one in Bunbury that members opposite promised in 2016? In 2016, the then government proposed a helicopter for Bunbury and put it in place for \$29 million. Members opposite are promising exactly the same thing for Geraldton for \$30 million, but they want far more out of it than what was put into Bunbury. That \$29 million for the ERHS helicopter in Bunbury lasted until 2018. It was two years' worth of funding. What happened then? We had to pick up the long-term funding for it. Who complained about there being no long-term funding? It was the National Party candidate in Bunbury! They underfunded the helicopter and then lost government, so we picked up the freight and they complained that it had not been funded properly. They did not fund it properly and, sure enough, here we are again. This time, it is in Geraldton.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Moore!

Mr F.M. LOGAN: They are leading people in Geraldton up the alley with absolutely false promises about that helicopter. It is identical to the one in Bunbury. It is a completely underfunded promise that would last for only two years. We will pull members opposite up on this, just like we did in Bunbury.

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MR D.J. KELLY (Bassendean — Minister for Water) [3.51 pm]: I think that was a pretty feeble attempt by the Nationals WA to substantiate the criticisms they are trying to make about water in regional WA. I want to make a couple of points in the time I have. The Water Corporation will spend \$260 million in 2020–21 on projects in regional WA. A couple of them should have been done previously. The wastewater treatment plant at Broome South will be closed down and moved to Broome North to deal with the environmental issues on Roebuck Bay. That will ensure that Broome, which is a great regional tourism centre, is not held back by having insufficient wastewater treatment plants. In addition, \$9 million will provide the town and the golf course with treated wastewater. That is a great outcome for Broome. That has been a problem for a long time. Members opposite never came anywhere near it.

Nearly \$39 million will be spent to upgrade water services for remote Aboriginal communities. Again, when they were in government, they could have done that. Remote Aboriginal communities and town camps are part of regional WA. We are doing it. They are services that members opposite never upgraded. We have spent \$15 million on the Glen Iris water treatment plant for Bunbury. When I became the Minister for Water, Aqwest complained that a new water treatment plant was needed, but it could not get the previous government interested at all in funding it. We have funded it and I opened it a few weeks ago. We have committed nearly \$19 million for the pipeline from Albany to Denmark to secure Denmark's water supply. The idea that we do not spend money in regional Western Australia on water infrastructure is just wrong, and the numbers show that.

I will give members a statistic that shows that members of the National Party, whether it be the current leader or the former leader, did not really care about regional customers for water services when they were Ministers for Water. In the last year that the Nationals were in government, the government cut off the water of 463 families in regional WA because they could not afford to pay their water bills. Members opposite cut off the water of 463 struggling families. What have we done in government? We have changed the way that the Water Corporation deals with customers in hardship. In the last pre-COVID financial year, there were only 72 restrictions in regional WA. That is a reduction in the number of restrictions in regional WA of over 80 per cent.

The member for Moore might be interested in this. I went out to the Water Corporation and spoke to the customer service staff there. They said that it had been terrible under the previous government. They used to have to ring up families and talk to them about why their water had been cut off. The job is different now. If people struggle, they ring them up and say that they want to help them pay their bills. That is the difference between us on this side and what members opposite did to struggling families in regional WA who could not pay their water bills. The member for Central Wheatbelt should hang her head in shame that she presided over that regime and did nothing about it. The member for Warren–Blackwood —

Point of Order

Mr R.S. LOVE: Surely, you are not going to allow the minister to attack members who are not in the chamber.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms S.E. Winton): Member for Moore, that is not a point of order. I remind you that you are on three calls.

Debate Resumed

Mr D.J. KELLY: Members of the Nationals WA complain that when they raise issues, I do some stuff but then I mention the Murray–Darling scheme and I mention climate change. We have a record 12 water deficiency declarations in the great southern and the southern wheatbelt not just because it has not rained, but also because those areas are experiencing a drying climate because of climate change. The Nationals say they are not climate change deniers, but if they do nothing about it, it is just the same. The result for people on the ground is exactly the same. Members opposite need to accept that the National Party is full of climate change deniers. That is having a real impact on farmers and regional communities in those areas.

Point of Order

Mr R.S. LOVE: The minister, in line with other ministers today, is completely misrepresenting the facts.

The ACTING SPEAKER: That is not a point of order, member for Moore. I am sorry.

Debate Resumed

Mr D.J. KELLY: When members of the Nationals WA raise water issues, I will raise the issues of climate change. I will also raise the issue of the disproportionate amount of money that federal National Party ministers have spent on the Murray–Darling scheme. They continually ignore Western Australia.

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Transport) [3.57 pm]: Today's matter of public interest demonstrates how members opposite did government compared with us. In our government, we all care about regional Western Australia. To quote Hon Alannah MacTiernan, they constantly had green versus blue wars in cabinet. As a result, royalties for regions was so important to the Nationals because that was the only way that they could get funding in regional WA, whereas in the WA Labor government, the whole government and the whole

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cabinet supports regional WA. There is no better example than transport. I picked up the former government's last budget papers to try to find what regional road projects existed. Compared with our budget, there are not many there. Hundreds of millions of dollars are being spent on the Bunbury Outer Ring Road and the Albany ring-road and projects around Western Australia. There is record road safety spending. It demonstrates that under the McGowan Labor government, every minister prioritises regional road safety. That is what members opposite cannot cop and do not understand. They continue to make petty and divisive arguments about projects that are funded in the city. All they want to do is create hate and division between regional and metro WA. We support all Western Australians and are keeping all Western Australians safe and strong.

Division

Question put and a division taken, the Deputy Speaker (Ms L.L. Baker) casting her vote with the noes, with the following result —

Ayes (14)

Mr I.C. Blayney	Mr P.A. Katsambanis	Mr J.E. McGrath	Mr P.J. Rundle
Mrs L.M. Harvey	Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup	Ms L. Mettam	Mr A. Krsticevic (<i>Teller</i>)
Mrs A.K. Hayden	Mr S.K. L'Estrange	Dr M.D. Nahan	
Dr D.J. Honey	Mr R.S. Love	Mr D.C. Nalder	

Noes (30)

Ms L.L. Baker	Mr T.J. Healy	Mr J.R. Quigley	Mr D.A. Templeman
Dr A.D. Buti	Mr D.J. Kelly	Mrs M.H. Roberts	Mr P.C. Tinley
Mr J.N. Carey	Mr F.M. Logan	Ms C.M. Rowe	Mr R.R. Whitby
Mrs R.M.J. Clarke	Mr M. McGowan	Ms R. Saffioti	Ms S.E. Winton
Mr R.H. Cook	Mr K.J.J. Michel	Ms A. Sanderson	Mr B.S. Wyatt
Mr M.J. Folkard	Mr M.P. Murray	Ms J.J. Shaw	Mr D.R. Michael (<i>Teller</i>)
Ms J.M. Freeman	Mr S.J. Price	Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski	
Ms E.L. Hamilton	Mr D.T. Punch	Mr C.J. Tallentire	

Pairs

Mr V.A. Catania	Ms M.M. Quirk
Ms M.J. Davies	Mrs L.M. O'Malley
Mr D.T. Redman	Mr W.J. Johnston
Mr K.M. O'Donnell	Mr P. Papalia
Mr W.R. Marmion	Ms S.F. McGurk

Question thus negatived.