



# Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

FORTIETH PARLIAMENT  
FIRST SESSION  
2020

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 11 November 2020



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**THE ACTING SPEAKER (Mr S.J. Price)** took the chair at 12 noon, acknowledged country and read prayers.

### **PARTHENON SCULPTURES**

#### *Petition*

**MR S.A. MILLMAN (Mount Lawley)** [12.03 pm]: I have a petition in the following terms —

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled.

We, the undersigned, say

It is unconscionable for the Government of the United Kingdom to retain possession of the Parthenon Sculptures. They are the rightful property of the Greek people and their government, and must be returned to Athens.

Now we ask the Legislative Assembly

To express its support, on behalf of the people of Western Australia, for the repatriation of the Parthenon Sculptures to Athens and to convey that support to the United Kingdom government through its representatives in Australia.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that you will give this matter earnest consideration and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

The petition bears 124 signatures and I certify that it conforms to the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly. [See petition 194.]

### **PAPERS TABLED**

Papers were tabled and ordered to lie upon the table of the house.

### **CHIEF MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATE — DEBORA COLVIN — RETIREMENT**

#### *Statement by Minister for Mental Health*

**MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Minister for Mental Health)** [12.04 pm]: I rise to recognise the service of one of our distinguished public officers in the mental health sector. Ms Debora Colvin will retire in the new year after 12 years of steering a key service that advocates for people's rights in the provision of mental health services across Western Australia. Listening to the people who receive mental health services and ensuring that we provide services that give them the utmost care is one of our key priorities, and I thank Ms Colvin for her part in that.

Commencing as the head of the Council of Official Visitors in 2008, Ms Colvin has made a significant contribution to supporting vulnerable people in our community with advocacy services. She has led the Mental Health Advocacy Service through significant periods of change to become an organisation that now has advocates working across Western Australia. As the inaugural Chief Mental Health Advocate, Ms Colvin has led her team of people to become the robust organisation it is now, providing individual advocacy services to vulnerable people and protecting patients' rights. As a champion of change, she has helped shape policy and practice in the mental health sector at the highest levels to improve the care of people experiencing acute or chronic mental illness. Through her reporting and advice over this time, she has steered many important changes in our public mental health system including recent improvements at the Kalgoorlie Health Campus, and she has highlighted how we can better care for our youth, Aboriginal people and people in the justice system.

I sincerely thank Ms Colvin for her commitment and dedicated work, including the frank advice she has provided to me as Minister for Mental Health, and wish her all the best for the future.

### **INTERNATIONAL PATHOLOGY DAY**

#### *Statement by Minister for Health*

**MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Minister for Health)** [12.05 pm]: I rise to inform the house that today we celebrate International Pathology Day. Pathology is often the unseen part of the health system, but it has played a crucial role in the management of the COVID-19 pandemic. The year 2020 has shone a light on our public pathology service: from our team of specimen collectors and phlebotomists on the frontline to our brilliant scientists and pathologists in the labs, PathWest has stepped forward and delivered. PathWest was responsible for rapidly developing COVID-19 test methodologies for the state and putting in place fast and reliable processes that have underpinned the robust testing strategy to manage this unprecedented pandemic.

PathWest analyses the majority of the state's COVID-19 tests, maintains a 24-hour turnaround time and is continuously working to find new testing methodologies, including recently commencing wastewater testing for Western Australia. However, pathology involves more than just COVID-19—pathology saves lives and prevents disease. We know that pathology is an integral part of a person's health journey. Pathology results inform more than 70 per cent of medical decisions and 100 per cent of cancer diagnoses and provide clinicians with critical information to help them correctly treat their patients.

Pathology is there from cradle to grave, through some of life's most challenging and exhilarating moments. It is pathology that confirms whether someone's family is expanding, provides the news that someone is now cancer free and informs the diagnosis and treatment options for infections, allergies, chronic diseases, cancers and countless other medical conditions. Pathology contributes to the health and wellbeing of the entire community and is at the heart of the public health system.

I would like to acknowledge PathWest and all other pathology teams across the state and thank them for their ongoing dedication and the integral role they play in the health of all Western Australians. Thank you, and happy International Pathology Day.

### **OLABUD DOOGETHU JUSTICE REINVESTMENT PROJECT**

*Statement by Attorney General*

**MR J.R. QUIGLEY (Butler — Attorney General)** [12.07 pm]: I rise to commend the exceptional work of Aboriginal leaders and the Shire of Halls Creek in their creation of the Olabud Doogethu justice reinvestment project. Olabud Doogethu, which is Kriol for "all of us together", is a partnership between the Shire of Halls Creek and 11 Aboriginal communities and is supported by Social Reinvestment WA.

In 2018, Aboriginal elders and members of those 11 communities came together to talk about the problems facing their communities and to design avenues to address them. As night falls in Halls Creek, many youths take to the streets, often because of the challenges faced at home. Boredom, hunger and hopelessness lead kids to commit crimes and other antisocial behaviour. To tackle this, in May 2019 Olabud Doogethu launched the youth engagement night officers initiative. Made up of local community leaders, the night officers patrol the streets and, with intimate knowledge of those kids, support them and their families. The kids respect them and feel safe with them. The night patrol is combined with a family support network, which works with the kids, their parents and families the next day to link them with support services to try to address some of the underlying challenges they face.

The results of this locally designed initiative are stunning. In addition to creating Aboriginal employment opportunities and empowering local leaders, Olabud Doogethu has achieved a 58 per cent reduction in burglaries, a 35 per cent reduction in stolen motor vehicles and a 28 per cent reduction in stealing offences. I am pleased to say that the McGowan government will now fund the night patrol program under the Kimberley juvenile justice strategy.

Earlier this year, Olabud Doogethu mobilised a doorknocking initiative to educate the community about COVID-19 and the measures they could take to protect their families. The youth engagement night officers' work is just one important part of circuit-breaking the cycle of crime, so the community can begin to respond to the underlying causes of offending. It is an excellent example of place-based justice reinvestment. The next phase of Olabud Doogethu is an alternative education certificate III program incorporating learning on country elements.

I commend the inspirational work of Olabud Doogethu. I am confident that its important initiatives will continue to empower local communities and improve the wellbeing of young people in Halls Creek.

### **WA SENIORS WEEK**

*Statement by Minister for Seniors and Ageing*

**MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie—Preston — Minister for Seniors and Ageing)** [12.10 pm]: I rise to inform the members of the house that this week is 2020's WA Seniors Week, which is running from 8 to 16 November. Seniors Week is a time to recognise the important and valued part that older Western Australians play in our communities, and celebrate the contributions made throughout their lives and into their senior years. As we all know, this has been a year like few others. Necessary COVID-19-related restrictions meant many seniors have experienced unprecedented disruptions to activities and social connections, which is why these opportunities for communities to come together and connect safely are now more important than ever. The state government has always been a proud supporter of Seniors Week, and this year we have contributed \$50 000 through a small grants program, coordinated by the Council on the Ageing WA, to go towards various events for seniors around our state. It is testament to the year-round efforts of COTA WA, the state government and the many tireless and dedicated volunteers across the sector that in a year of uncertainty Seniors Week is still in full swing.

The dedication of the Seniors Recreation Council of WA has also meant that the premier event of Seniors Week, Have a Go Day, is still offering a plethora of activities and attractions at Burswood Park today, keeping up with the tradition established in 1992. I look forward to participating in Have a Go Day each year, and trying my hand at new activities on the day is certainly one of the perks of this job. I was very privileged to open the Have a Go Day

celebrations this morning, which this year, in partnership with the local RSL sub-branch, included a moment of silence and a stunning shower of poppies to acknowledge Remembrance Day. As many of our seniors have served this country in war and in peace, it was very moving for this outstanding contribution to be integrated into the day.

These events held throughout Seniors Week provide wonderful opportunities for everyone to engage with their local community, to see and experience new things and connect with people of all ages and backgrounds. I encourage all members to get involved in the week's events being held in their local areas, and to show their support and admiration for our older Western Australians and their ongoing contribution to our community.

## REMEMBRANCE DAY

*Statement by Minister for Veterans Issues*

**MR P.C. TINLEY (Willagee — Minister for Veterans Issues)** [12.13 pm]: This year the Western Australian government has commemorated Remembrance Day at the State War Memorial in Kings Park. I, along with Premier Mark McGowan, Governor Kim Beazley, and the Leader of the Opposition, attended the event to honour the Western Australian men and women who served in the Great War, and those who lost their lives as a result. Remembrance Day marks the anniversary of the end of World War I at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month in 1918. In honour of those who made the ultimate sacrifice, 20 000 knitted poppies are on display on the steps of the State War Memorial leading to the Cenotaph and another 20 000 are planted around the Flame of Remembrance. There is also a display of falling poppies on the large circular screen at Yagan Square for Perth city visitors to visit and mark Remembrance Day.

Each year on this day, Australians observe one minute's silence at 11.00 am in memory of those who died or suffered in all wars and armed conflicts. Their sacrifice serves as a constant reminder of the price we pay to live in an open and democratic society. The unification of our collective will to stand up against tyranny and oppression resonates strongly throughout the Australian collective conscious in 2020 as we band together against a common enemy called COVID-19.

Let the sacrifice of those men and women give us strength to persevere through these uncertain times and remain constantly vigilant to any threat to our democracy and way of life.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.

Lest we forget.

## ARTIFICIAL REEF — OCEAN REEF

*Statement by Minister for Fisheries*

**MR P.C. TINLEY (Willagee — Minister for Fisheries)** [12.15 pm]: Artificial reefs are designed to enhance recreational fishing opportunities by providing additional habitat for fish and other aquatic organisms, increasing their numbers in the area. The reefs come in many different sizes, shapes and models, for example some are tower-like steel structures whereas others are cube-shaped and constructed from reinforced concrete. Once installed on the ocean floor, the reef structures begin to be populated by aquatic life, attracting more organisms and fish, and a food web begins to develop.

I am pleased to inform the house that some of our Perth school students have used their engineering skills to help create some of the modules that will be used to construct a new fishing hot spot about seven kilometres offshore from Ocean Reef. The McGowan government's \$1 million north metropolitan artificial reef project has all the environmental approvals required and is scheduled for installation early in 2021. This will be the seventh purpose-built artificial reef to be installed in Western Australia in the past eight years. Other reefs are already located off Dunsborough, Bunbury, Mandurah, south of Rottnest Island, Esperance and in the Exmouth Gulf.

Artificial reefs are funded from recreational fishing licence fees that are invested back into recreational fishing through the Recreational Fishing Initiatives Fund. About 20 students from schools across Perth participating in a science, technology, engineering and mathematics program named Future Engineers, which is run by the WISE Professional Network for high school girls in years 8 to 12, worked with contractors Subcon Blue Solutions, a company in Henderson, to cast some of the modules that will form the reef.

Installed at a depth of 27 metres, the new artificial reef will enhance fish diversity and create new recreational fishing and diving opportunities to attract more visitors to the area. It will consist of 292 low-relief concrete modules, ranging in height from 0.7 metres to 1.8 metres, and spanning an area of 150 000 square metres. The modules are designed to attract multiple fish species including yellowtail kingfish, samson fish, silver trevally and pink snapper. This announcement builds upon the McGowan government's commitment to enhancing the recreational fishing experience in Western Australia for generations to come.

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE — VALEDICTORY SPEECHES***Standing Orders Suspension — Motion*

On motion by **Mrs M.H. Roberts (Minister for Police)**, on behalf of the Leader of the House, resolved —

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as is necessary to enable —

- (a) on Tuesday, 17 November 2020 the members for Cockburn, Riverton and Collie–Preston to make valedictory speeches of not more than 30 minutes from 4.30 pm; and
- (b) on Wednesday, 18 November 2020 —
  - (i) private members’ business to take precedence between 4.00 pm and 5.30 pm; and
  - (ii) the members for South Perth and Kimberley and the Speaker to make valedictory speeches of not more than 30 minutes from 5.30 pm.

**ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AMENDMENT BILL (NO. 2) 2020***Returned*

Bill returned from the Council with amendments.

*As to Consideration in Detail*

On motion by **Mr R.R. Whitby (Parliamentary Secretary)**, resolved —

That the Council’s requested amendments be considered in detail forthwith.

*Consideration in Detail*

The amendments requested by the Council were as follows —

No 1

Clause 2, page 2, line 7 — To delete “Royal Assent;” and substitute —

Royal Assent (*assent day*):

No 2

Clause 2, page 2, after line 13 — To insert —

(2) However —

- (a) if sections 4 and 5 do not come into operation before the end of the period of 10 years beginning on assent day, this Act is repealed on the day after that period ends; or
- (b) if paragraph (a) does not apply, and a provision of this Act does not come into operation before the end of the period of 10 years beginning on assent day, that provision is repealed on the day after that period ends.

No 3

Clause 4, page 2, line 20 — To insert after “prescribe” —

or provide for the determination of

**Mr R.R. WHITBY:** I move —

That amendment 1 requested by the Council be made.

**Question put and passed; the Council’s requested amendment made.**

**Mr R.R. WHITBY:** I move —

That amendment 2 requested by the Council be made.

**Question put and passed; the Council’s requested amendment made.**

**Mr R.R. WHITBY:** I move —

That amendment 3 requested by the Council be made.

**Question put and passed; the Council’s requested amendment made.**

**The Council acquainted accordingly.**

**PUBLIC HEALTH AMENDMENT (SAFE ACCESS ZONES) BILL 2020***Second Reading*

Resumed from 10 November.

**MS L. METTAM (Vasse)** [12.21 pm]: I will speak briefly on the Public Health Amendment (Safe Access Zones) Bill 2020. This bill proposes safe access zones, which will provide a 150-metre buffer around premises at which abortions are provided, to prevent abortion-related demonstrations close to these premises. This would bring WA into line with other Australian jurisdictions, apart from South Australia, where a bill to introduce safe access zones is currently before the South Australian Parliament. I understand there has been a lot of public interest in what has been proposed here with 4 000 submissions from the general public and more than 40 submissions from public and private organisations. Seventy per cent of respondents support the introduction of safe access zones around abortion services in Western Australia. Although it is a conscience vote of this Parliament, I will vote in support of this bill because I believe that women attending these clinics to undertake a legal procedure deserve to do so with privacy and respect. According to Marie Stopes Australia, right-to-life advocates spent approximately 2 995 hours outside the Marie Stopes Australia Midland clinic. In 2018, the clinic spent more than \$6 000 upgrading security cameras and protective measures for staff and clients. This is a concern for not only those attending the clinics, but also clearly the staff themselves. Each week clinic staff provide support to clients who are distressed by the presence of people such as this outside the clinic.

I have spoken to those who have been involved in providing what they call “kerbside counselling” and I appreciate what they think they are trying to achieve. Their intention is to provide support to vulnerable women and to try to convince them that the decision to abort is not the only option. However, I do not believe this is the place to do so. The decision has clearly been made, given the approach to these clinics, and these individuals deserve privacy in undertaking a lawful activity. It is evident that existing laws are inadequate in addressing the specific confrontations of women accessing these services, especially for young women who, when using these services, are probably at the most mentally vulnerable time in their life. To be approached at such a time oversteps an acceptable boundary. This bill is about respecting a woman’s right to access a medical service. It allows women to access facilities that provide reproductive health services safely and with dignity. It also protects the workers of such clinics from obstruction and intimidation. These people turn up to work each day to do their jobs just like you and me and must also face the apprehension of what awaits them when they attend work.

WA is one of only two states that do not have safe access zones in place. Safe access zones will provide a 150-metre safety bubble around these clinics. They will stop the approach, harassment, intimidation and public judgement of staff and clients outside these clinics. It should also be remembered that this bill does not prohibit protesting and it does not limit free speech. People who feel passionately about this issue can still protest outside a designated protest perimeter. They can also protest via the entire array of recognised channels, including protesting outside Parliament House, organising petitions and rallies, sending emails and letters to members of Parliament, using social and general forms of media and also many other methods of protest.

This is not a debate or legislation about the legality of abortion. That debate has occurred and will perhaps continue to occur. Parliament and the courts have established the criteria and ethics around a woman’s right to be in charge of her own body. We must respect that outcome. In light of those few words, I commend the bill to the house.

**DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe)** [12.27 pm]: I also rise to speak on the Public Health Amendment (Safe Access Zones) Bill 2020. I say at the outset that it appears, and as far as we know, that this is not a priority bill for the government. The Leader of the Opposition in the upper house has received a list of priority bills and this bill is not on that list, so my assumption is that the government does not intend to get this bill through this Parliament and it will need to be reintroduced.

**Mr R.H. Cook:** No, we just know you’ll block it. We know what you will do with the bill. We have seen your colours before, my friend. We know what you’ll do in the other place.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Can I say that the minister’s comments really heighten my concerns. If this has been done as a stunt, as some sort of wedge issue so that the minister can make those comments, that is a real disappointment for this Parliament. It is a real disappointment if he is in fact leading members of the public —

**Mr R.H. Cook:** You wouldn’t understand would you?

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister for Health!

**Mr R.H. Cook:** We know what sort of cynicism you bring to this place. You’re just a wrecker like the members in the other place.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** The minister’s comments heighten my concern and that is that he has done this simply as a stunt, not because he genuinely —

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Ms J.J. Shaw** interjected.

**Mr R.H. Cook:** Why don't you conduct yourself with some dignity, you grubby little man!

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister for Health and member for Swan Hills!

*Withdrawal of Remark*

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I call on the member opposite to withdraw. He is making denigrating comments to another member in this house.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr S.J. Price):** It is not an unparliamentary term.

*Debate Resumed*

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Then my concern is that the grubby minister, can I say, is leading women in this state to believe that he intends to pass this legislation in this term of Parliament, and he does not.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister, members for Swan Hills and Burns Beach, can we just let the member make his contribution please.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** The government has no intention of passing this bill in this term of Parliament and I think that is misleading women in the state of Western Australia. The member has no idea of my view on this bill. I encourage the member to listen to my view on this bill.

**Ms A. Sanderson** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Morley!

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Who has lowered the tone?

**Ms A. Sanderson** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members, let us just get through this, please.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** This government has introduced a bill that it has no intention of passing in this term of Parliament, based on the list of bills that has been given to our leader in the upper house. If that is not the case, clarify it. I think it is disappointing if this is being done simply as a wedge issue. This is a critically important issue. I understand in great detail the intent of this bill. It is a very complex issue and I think the great majority of people would support most parts of the bill. If members opposite do not imagine what I am going to say but listen to what I say, they may be enlightened. Proposed section 202N, "Purpose", states —

The purpose of this Part is —

- (a) to provide for safe access zones around premises at which abortions are provided so as to protect the safety and wellbeing, and respect the privacy and dignity, of —
  - (i) persons accessing the services provided at those premises; and
  - (ii) employees and other persons who need to access those premises in the course of their duties and responsibilities;
- and
- (b) to prohibit publication and distribution of certain recordings.

I do not think there is a person in this place, including me, who does not support that intent in the bill. I think that the great majority of Western Australians would in fact support that intent. My concern is with the breadth of the terms used in subsequent provisions in the bill. For example, proposed section 202O, "Terms used", contains the definition of "distribute", which states —

- (a) communicate, exhibit, send, supply, offer or transmit, whether to a particular person or not; and
- (b) make available for access, whether by a particular person or not; ...

A distance of 150 metres is referred to later in the bill.

Proposed section 202P(2)(b) states —

- subject to subsection (3), communicates by any means in relation to abortion in a manner that is —
  - (i) able to be seen or heard by a person accessing, attempting to access or leaving premises at which abortions are provided; and
  - (ii) reasonably likely to cause distress or anxiety;

To understand the impact of the bill, we need to understand the breadth of those terms. As I said, I do not think this is a trivial issue. I know that these debates have been held in one form or another for some time, and it is portrayed as though there is a very clear answer one way or the other and anyone who dares suggest that there may be some ambiguity or greyness in the debate is pilloried and they get the response that I received when I pointed out that the government has not stated that this is a priority bill that it intends to put through Parliament this year. As the minister stated in his second reading speech, the bill is not about abortion. That debate has been held in this place, and access to safe abortions is a legal right for all women in Western Australia.

I do not believe that any person in this place believes that it is appropriate for women using these services to be subject to harassment or vilification. Some people in this place would know that some community groups are concerned that not all women accessing abortion clinics and hospitals are doing so of their own free will. They are concerned that some women have been subject to harassment by their partner, their family and even their friends. They are concerned that some women may be accessing the services because they do not know how they will be supported during pregnancy or after the child is born. I am going to give an example, and I understand that it is an extreme example, but I think it illustrates the point. I will read an article published in the *Daily Mail Australia* of 5 March 2017. I will not name the people because I do not want to give that any air, but I can provide that information for people if they wish. The article states —

**‘The pressure was relentless’: Former girlfriend of ... ‘was paid \$50,000 to get an abortion in contract brokered by former club player’**

- **The 24-year-old woman fell pregnant while dating ... last year**
- **A contract was drawn-up stating the pregnancy was to be terminated**
- **The woman, known only as Miss X, was paid \$50,000 to have the abortion**
- **She said she felt ‘relentless pressure’ to have the procedure in November**

I will quote some little parts of the article —

‘I felt I had no other option than to get rid of the baby, the pressure was relentless,’ she said.

A contract was drawn-up before the procedure stating the pregnancy would be terminated by agreement of both parties and ... would pay Miss X the \$50,000.

The deal to pay Miss X the money was allegedly brokered by club intermediary ...

Miss X claims ... made clear she would be provided ‘minimum support’ if she kept the baby.

She said she felt ‘bullied’ and ‘boxed into a corner’.

Miss X, who broke up with ... after she fell pregnant, says she ending up donating the money to charity because she was full of regret.

I fully understand that this is an extreme example. However, I have heard other stories about women who felt that they were subject to extreme pressure by their families and/or their partner to terminate a pregnancy. As I have indicated already, I strongly agree with the contention that women should have safe access to abortion services and be free from harassment. My key concern with the bill is what may be seen to be, to quote the phrase in proposed section 202P(2)(b)(ii) of the bill, “reasonably likely to cause distress or anxiety”. That is a very broad description that could encompass a very wide set of behaviours. As I have indicated, I have no sympathy for people who deliberately try to impede or cause distress or anxiety to women accessing abortion services. The key question is: does that mean that there can be no interaction with a woman accessing the service?

A concern has been expressed to me by a Christian organisation that the very broad scope of this bill will unfairly impede the work that it does to assist women who may be accessing an abortion service but who are doing so because they are suffering from undue pressure or financial distress. One such group is 40 Weeks to Life.

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** Does that Christian group support safe access to abortion in the absence of harassment? If they don’t, they’re not really in the best position to take up that issue, I would have thought.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I will go on further to talk about this. I believe these are well-meaning people. They have a different view on other things, but I believe they are well meaning in this regard. I am happy to listen to other members debate this point in this place.

**Ms A. Sanderson:** You weren’t here last night listening to other members.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** No; I was extremely ill in bed at home with gastro.

**Ms A. Sanderson:** Thanks for bringing it.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** The member can have it one way or the other.

**Ms A. Sanderson** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Morley!

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Can I continue please? I will be happy to answer interjections in a moment.

This group conducts prayer vigils —

**Ms A. Sanderson** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Morley!

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Members of this group conduct prayer vigils outside the clinics and also hand out brochures to women attending the clinics, offering help and support. They claim that since 2012 at least 55 women have accepted their offer for help and went on to have their baby. They believe that 55 people are alive today because of their action.

The minister also pointed out in his second reading speech that groups such as 40 Weeks to Life currently require a police permit under the Public Order in Streets Act 1984. The police regularly issue such permits that specify conditions for a group's activity. I believe that the broad scope of the bill presupposes that every woman accessing an abortion clinic is fully resolved to go through with the process and is doing so of her own free will.

I am sure—I think that this is in line with most members—that that is the case for the great majority of women who attend the clinics. I have the greatest empathy with how those women must feel and the anguish that they go through when they terminate their pregnancy. I also have great empathy with the women who are accessing the service under extreme pressure from a partner or their family, or because they believe that they simply cannot financially cope with a child. Women should be able to access abortion services without being harassed or impeded. But I also believe that it is fair that people with good intent should have the opportunity to politely offer to help someone who is accessing those services because of extreme pressure or financial distress.

As I indicated, I support the greater part of the bill. However, I am concerned—this is in the form of a question to the minister—that the very broad scope of the restrictions in this bill will go too far and will prevent reasonable people behaving in a proper and reasonable way when assisting women accessing abortion under distress. I will say, minister, that I am concerned. I understand that the great majority of women who access abortion services are likely to be fully resolved in the matter and that they intend to go ahead, and that they should be able to do that unimpeded. I fully accept and understand that. I appreciate that there will be a small number—based on the numbers I have quoted, it is a small number—but some women are subject to enormous duress and pressure from their partners and may be suffering extreme financial distress and access the service only because of that and not because they, in fact, wish to terminate the pregnancy. But I would like to know what other avenues will be provided to ensure that all the women who access these services are doing so of their free will? As I said, I have no truck with people standing there. If they are abusive or stand in the way of someone, that is wrong and they should be dealt with. That is improper. If someone harasses the staff operating in those places, that is wrong and improper. But if someone simply wants to ask someone, “Look, would you like some help? Would you like some assistance?”, then I am concerned that if they cannot, some women will go through with the termination of a pregnancy when they may not have done. The information I have is that since 2012, 55 people have not gone down that path.

That is my simple concern about the bill. I fully understand the intent of the bill and I accept the greater part of the intent of the bill. However, I am concerned about how women who are subject to duress and undue pressure from partners or to financial stress will get help so that they keep a child they want to keep.

**MS J.J. SHAW (Swan Hills)** [12.42 pm]: I rise to speak in support of the Public Health Amendment (Safe Access Zones) Bill 2020. I have had a very longstanding personal interest in this matter and this matter also has considerable significance in my community. Back in 1997, as a first-year law student, I remember my first law class. It was during the time when Tony Abbott and Brian Harradine did that absolutely dreadful deal to prevent women's access to RU486. My group within that first-year law class was given this topic to debate. We had to do a term-long project on the legalities and intersection between the ethical and moral considerations, and the medical advice on RU486. One of my lifelong friends, Melissa, and I had fundamentally opposed views on abortion and it was really a testing time for our relationship. This issue really goes to so many deeply held beliefs for so many people. I held the view then, and I hold the same view now, that these are intensely personal decisions and that no-one has the right to interfere with those personal views—those decisions that women make over their bodies during what is often a profoundly challenging and very difficult time. I remember being absolutely incensed at the right that Tony Abbott and those religious zealots who now seem to control the Liberal Party felt that they had to control my body and other young women's bodies. That was back in 1997 and it infuriated me then, but then I took the—sometimes, I think—crazy decision to run for Parliament.

I want to address some of the issues that the member for Cottesloe made about how this is just a last-minute issue for the Labor Party. It absolutely is not. I recall the Minister for Health absolutely affirming his personal support for safe access zones in early 2017. Later on that year, the party cemented its position on safe access zones. In fact, in the following year, I remember at our state conference in 2018, Labor for Choice held a side seminar commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the passage of the Davenport bill. I went to that seminar and the room was full of young women. Cheryl Davenport and Di Warnock recounted their experiences in passing the Davenport bill. It took two and a half months for that legislation to pass. When that bill was first introduced into the upper house,

the numbers had been done and it had a majority of one. They developed that legislation and mediated across the aisle to pass that bill with a vote of 23–9. At that time, people in the upper house were prepared to acknowledge that women do have the right to autonomy and should be able to exercise control over their bodies, and that they have the right to do that in a safe, dignified and private way.

That seminar was facilitated by two young women who were about the same age as I was when, in 1997, I, as a first-year university student, was debating exactly the same issues. I remember offering the observation to the room that I was deeply disappointed that 20 years later women, who were the same age as I had been in 1997, were still grappling with the very same issues—the right to autonomy over our bodies and the right to access reproductive health in a safe and private way. It is shameful that we are still having these debates and that we are still having to fight those religious zealots in control of the Liberal Party. It is absolutely a blight on our democracy. Those people up there who think that they have any right to tell any woman what she can and cannot do with her body need to take a strong hard look at themselves! I get very upset about this.

This bill is also deeply relevant to my local community, because the previous government—again dominated by religious zeal—prevented women in my community accessing our publicly funded hospital for reproductive health services. Women in Midland have to face protests at the Marie Stopes clinic at a time when they are really vulnerable and often in very traumatic circumstances. It was the Liberal Party’s decision to do that. It is the religious zealots in the upper house who continue to prevent the passage of any of these sorts of bills—reforms that respect autonomy and individual choice and our capacity to have a conscience and to exercise that conscience, and to exercise control over our bodies in the way that we see fit. Those people cannot accept that women in Western Australia should be able to access reproductive health in safety, with dignity and in privacy. Those women face demonstrations that effectively act as a barrier to accessing legal health services. That causes distress and anxiety to patients and staff.

I remember an article in *The West Australian* dated Friday, 8 February 2019, titled “Staff safety fears at abortion clinic”, which explained how staff were forced to wear body cameras and how CCTV equipment had to be installed at the clinic to prevent anti-abortion protesters who had managed to obtain a permit to carry out one of their 40 days of Lent protests. The people of Midland should know that the current Liberal Party candidate for Midland started that. The current Liberal Party candidate for Midland, as reported by ABC Perth on Monday, 1 February 2016, as part of a religious organisation with origins in the United States, set up a prayer vigil outside that Midland abortion clinic. Every year now, women in my community have to face that even as they grapple with some of the most profoundly challenging, deeply personal and traumatic decisions they will ever make. The people of Midland need to be aware of that. Fast-forward to 2019, and the staff at the Midland clinic are still complaining about being spat on and called murderers, and having holy water thrown at their cars by protesters outside that clinic. This is incredibly traumatic and distressing for the women who use the clinic and for the staff. These are difficult decisions and those people are not making them any easier. The permits to protest were cancelled during COVID-19, and thank goodness they were.

**Ms A. Sanderson:** They still turned up.

**Ms J.J. SHAW:** I know. The permits were cancelled on 20 March but on 27 March the clinic had to call the police and ask the protesters to move on. Even in the face of a pandemic—one of the most significant health crises this community has ever faced, when medical and nursing staff are going through an incredibly tough time as it is—this mob still felt that it was appropriate to protest at these abortion clinics, and the Liberal Party continues to oppose the reforms that would prevent that from happening. The position that those opposite are taking is unbelievable. The people of Midland need to think long and hard about who they vote for in the 2021 election because there is a genuine choice and it affects our community and women’s rights in our community. People need to understand that.

In February 2019, the government announced a consultation process to initiate some legislative reform. Again, I will talk to some of the points that have been made about the timetable for this legislation. It was apparent in February 2019 that the High Court challenges to the Victorian and Tasmanian cases were on foot. It was important to resolve those issues prior to developing legislation because any government wants to ensure that the legislation it implements is constitutionally valid, so it was important that the government did that. In April 2019, after the High Court decision had been handed down, the government then commenced consultation and issued a consultation paper, the process for which ended on 31 May 2019. That consultation paper considered two options. The first was the retention of the status quo, with no changes being made to the current regulatory system. That would allow this disgusting behaviour that we see outside the abortion clinics to continue and be managed by the police through the permit system, leaving the existing criminal and civil courses of action available. The only way individuals who were adversely affected could deal with this was to get recourse through the courts. Instead of the government stepping up and protecting patients and staff, clinics would have to continue to address the problem with their own means and provide their staff with body cameras and use CCTV because of the conduct of those people. That is the first option that the consultation paper sought feedback on.

The second option was specifically the introduction of safe access zones around premises that provide abortion services or other relevant health services such as fertility treatments, assisted reproductive services, contraception, family planning, sexually transmitted infection testing and treatment, and abortions. I argue that abortions should

still be available in public hospitals, but because of the Liberal Party's disgraceful decisions when it was last in government, they are not available at our local public hospital. The primary objective of the second option is to establish a buffer zone around premises and make it an offence to engage in prohibited behaviour within the zone. That is the sort of conduct that we were just discussing that I know other members have spoken about. It is designed to protect patients and staff who access clinics from harassment and intimidation. It is important to take time on such an important issue as this to ensure that the legislation is constitutionally valid, reflects the will of the community and provides the protections that are intended.

The consultation response to this process was absolutely extraordinary. There were 235 email and paper submissions and nearly 4 000 engagements through an online survey. Of the 3 300 respondents, 83.8 per cent identified that they were from WA, which goes to show how passionately this issue is felt in Western Australia. Seventy per cent of all the submissions were in favour of introducing safe access zones. Yet again, this is another issue for which the Liberal Party is showing itself to be fundamentally off the mark in its understanding of what the people of Western Australia want and expect of their governments. Of the 2 927 respondents in favour of safe access zones, 48 per cent supported access zones around other health services; 75 per cent supported safe access zones of 150 metres, which is quite a buffer zone; 79.5 per cent of submissions supported safe access zones being in place for 24 hours, seven days a week; 96 per cent supported what would constitute prohibited behaviour in safe access zones being modelled on the prohibited behaviours outlined in Victoria's Public Health and Wellbeing Act, which is very important to consider when the legislative mechanism incorporated in the Victorian bill was subsequently litigated in the High Court; and 77.3 per cent of submissions opposed the inclusion of additional exemptions.

Seven recommendations were produced following that consultation process. They are: that safe access zones legislation should be introduced; that those zones should apply to premises at which abortions are provided; that the premises and a buffer area of 150 metres from the boundaries should be protected; that the zones should be protected for 24/7; that the definition of "prohibited behaviour" should be modelled on Victoria's definition; that the legislation should not provide for exemptions; and, finally, that there be a maximum penalty of a fine of \$12 000 and 12 months' imprisonment for engaging in prohibited behaviour in a safe access zone and for the publication and distribution of recorded material without consent.

Following hot on the heels of the conclusion of that consultation process, in February 2020, the government committed to that legislation. Again, that was done as quickly as possible once the High Court decision had been made, the public's views were known and adequate consideration had been given to whether the mechanisms would achieve their intended effect. That is when the government committed to introducing the legislation. Something happened in February that was pretty earth-shattering for the Department of Health—COVID-19—and it completely reoriented the Minister for Health and the Department of Health to focus on responding to the pandemic. Unfortunately, that delayed the progression of this legislation, which is understandable, but it certainly has not been for want of a desire to deliver this legislation and get it through.

Again, I want to address some of the, frankly, petty and nasty commentary that has been coming out from the Liberal Party about the progression of this legislation. It is a shameful misrepresentation of the process that this government went through. This has always been a priority of the Labor government and a longstanding priority for the Labor Party. It is disingenuous in the extreme for the Liberal Party to present the position in any other way.

**Dr D.J. Honey:** Then why wasn't it a priority bill?

**Ms J.J. SHAW:** Perhaps if the member for Cottesloe was not conducting conversations in the chamber while I was speaking, he may have actually heard why the progression of the bill was delayed.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms J.J. SHAW:** As I said, the COVID-19 pandemic considerably delayed the Department of Health's ability to develop the bill. But as soon as it was possible for the Department of Health and the minister to reorient their staff and teams to the development of the bill, they promptly did that, and the legislation was introduced in October 2020. I just say that it is disingenuous for the Liberal Party to somehow claim that this bill has not been progressed as expeditiously, thoroughly and promptly as possible.

**Dr D.J. Honey** interjected.

**Ms J.J. SHAW:** Mr Acting Speaker, again I would ask for your protection from the snide comments coming from those opposite.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Yes. Carry on, member.

**Ms J.J. SHAW:** Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker.

The abortion laws that this state has ended up with are modelled on the Victorian laws. It is very important that that is the case, because those laws have been tested in the High Court, which upheld the use of buffer zones outside health clinics. The challenge to the legislation was brought by two anti-abortionists. One of those was charged under the Victorian legislation with engaging in prohibited behaviour, namely communicating about abortions with persons accessing premises at which abortions are provided while within a safe access zone, in a way that is reasonably

likely to cause anxiety or distress. The second person was charged under the Tasmanian legislation for holding placards, leaflets and a media release. Each of those appellants challenged the constitutional validity of the laws, arguing that they impermissibly burdened the freedom of communication about matters of government and politics that is implied in the Constitution.

In upholding the Victorian laws, Chief Justice Kiefel and Justices Bell and Keane applied the test in *McCloy v NSW*. I had to dust off my legal research skills for this; it has been quite some time since I have had to do this. They noted in their judgement —

The implied freedom is not a guarantee of an audience; a fortiori, it is not an entitlement to force a message on an audience held captive to that message. ... it is inconsistent with the dignity of members of the sovereign people to seek to hold them captive in that way.

That is precisely what these anti-abortion advocates seek to do.

*McCloy* was also cited by Chief Justice Kiefel and Justices Bell and Keane when they said —

A law calculated to maintain the dignity of members of the sovereign people by ensuring that they are not held captive by an uninvited political message accords with the political sovereignty which underpins the implied freedom.

A balancing act needs to be achieved here. The Victorian legislation has provided a great template for the Western Australian legislation.

The important point to appreciate is that the proposed amendments do not stop freedom of speech. People can still protest. People can still write to their members of Parliament. People can still gather and protest on the steps of Parliament House. They can issue petitions. They can march up and down St Georges Terrace—so long as they have permits, of course. What they cannot do is turn up outside abortion clinics and other medical facilities at which women are exercising their fundamental right to autonomy over their body and to make choices about what happens to them. No man can ever appreciate how difficult those choices are. No person who has never had to make those choices can ever appreciate how difficult they are. Those choices are usually made when people are extraordinarily vulnerable and are genuinely grappling with their conscience and going through considerable trauma. Those people deserve safety, privacy and dignity, and those who oppose abortion should respect their right to safety, privacy and dignity.

I commend the Minister for Health for bringing this legislation forward, given the difficulty presented by the High Court challenge, and understanding that we need to ensure that this bill will genuinely deliver on its purpose. I commend the minister also for bringing this legislation forward despite the significant challenges caused by COVID-19, which, as I said, completely reoriented the attention of the Department of Health and the Minister for Health.

I fully commend the bill to the house. I encourage the religious zealots who seem to control the Liberal Party in many ways and on many issues, and who seem so blindly—wilfully, perhaps—ignorant of the views of the polity across a range of issues, whether it is banning puppy farms or protecting women’s right to choose, to take a long hard look at themselves. On all sorts of issues, Liberal Party members are tone deaf to the Western Australian community. If they do not take a long hard look at themselves, I suspect that they may face electoral oblivion for some time to come.

**MR M.J. FOLKARD (Burns Beach)** [1.04 pm]: I rise to speak to Public Health Amendment (Safe Access Zones) Bill 2020. Yesterday, I listened to the member for Armadale’s speech, and also to the members for Morley and Mirrabooka and the fine words they delivered to this house. This morning, I had the privilege of listening to the member for Vasse and her fine words. Today, I listened to the member for Swan Hills, with her passion about this particular area and this bill.

The purpose of this legislation is to protect and respect the safety, dignity, wellbeing and privacy of individuals who seek access to legal medical services. This legislation is not about the pros and cons of family planning or abortion. The Minister for Health set that out when he spoke on the bill. This bill is about creating a safe access zone. The bill defines a “safe access zone” as the area within 150 metres outside the boundary of a family planning service. I am probably in a fairly unique position compared with anyone else in this house, because I have had to protect these clinics. I think the prescribed distance should be greater, and I will explain that by outlining a personal experience that I had in dealing with a family planning clinic.

All members would be aware that I was a policeman for many years. Early in my career, before all the current legislation about family planning and abortion was put through this place, I had to deal with the protests that were taking place in the metropolitan area outside family planning clinics, as they were referred to in their time. My good old sergeant said to me, “Constable, I want you to go and watch one of those crowds for me.” I said, “Yes, boss. What else do you want me to do?” He said, “I just want you to watch, and, if there is any misbehaviour, I want you to deal with it.” So off I went in plain clothes, and for about three days I watched one of these protests. There was a group of evangelicals—I suppose religious zealots would be another way of describing them—and I watched how they were protesting. Back in the day, they were quite clever; they knew the law. They would protest on the boundary of the properties involved. The particular group that I watched over time numbered about three dozen. They would hold up large placards and signs.

I watched the bullying tactics that they used as people approached the clinic or drove up in cars, and how they would spit on cars or throw water on cars. I even watched what they did to the employees at those places. Among the group that I had been watching for a couple of days was a particularly tall fellow. I remember that specifically. He had a camera. As people approached that clinic, he would start taking photos of them. If they were in a car, or if they were employees who had just got off the bus and were walking towards the clinic, he would take photos. His vitriol towards them was nothing short of disgraceful. I can say that with all my heart.

After about three days, I watched a young girl approach the centre. I will never say her name, because I have forgotten it, to be frank. That is probably one of the ways that I dealt with it. She was about 16 or 17 years of age. She was by herself. I saw her walk towards the clinic. I watched the behaviour of the crowd. The closer she got, the more abuse, intimidation and harassment she received. I have mentioned the fellow with the camera. This guy was about six foot eight inches tall. He was a monster of a man. He was taking photos of this young woman, and he was yelling at her that he was going to show the world her face and what she was doing. I saw the look on this poor girl's face. I saw her body language. It had changed. She was terrified. But, to her credit, she kept walking.

I continued watching the crowd and making notes as all good policemen would do. Probably about half an hour after I saw her approach the clinic, an ambulance arrived with its sirens on. I thought: what the heck is going on here? I went over to the clinic and went inside. Upon arriving at the clinic, this young girl had gone into the toilets and used a set of nail clippers to try to tear her wrists apart in an attempt at suicide. That was how terrified this poor woman was. I do not know how, but I ended up in the back of the ambulance with her. She just kept on saying, "He's got my photo. He's got my photo." She kept repeating it over and over again. I got out of the ambulance and the paramedics did their job and off it went. I went back to the car, spoke to my partner and said, "I'm gonna fix this prick!" Pardon my language. I rang the local coppers and had them pull out the front in a van. This fella was a big fella. I walked up to him in the middle of the crowd, grabbed him by the scruff of his throat, and somewhere else, and I frogmarched him to the back of the van and threw him up against it. I opened it—the other coppers helped me out—and we threw him inside. I grabbed all his cameras off him—made sure we had all those—and we took him back to the police station.

He kicked up—I remember that—and I remember looking at him before we put him in the back of the van, thinking go on, mate. Give me the privilege. Throw a punch at me, for God's sake. He was in tears because it would have been the first time, I think, that this bugger had ever been bullied. I threw him in the back of the van. We took him back to the station. I looked at the sergeant and he said, "Nah, take him down the lockup. He ain't worth being processed here." Off we went back to the lock-up. We arrived there; we processed him and he got bail. I think I ended up with about five or six complaints that day. By some miracle, all his film was overexposed—I do not know why. His camera was broken—I do not know how that happened. I think it was in the back of the van when he was kicking up. Anyway, that is life. In the old days, we used to call them yellow perils and I remember I got four yellow perils for it. I also have a memory of going to the back of the van and some ladies hit me with their signs, probably because someone had actually stood up to them and their horrible behaviour.

We went through the court process. I had prepared my brief and all that sort of stuff and the bloke pleaded not guilty. The only offence that I could charge him with back in the day was disorderly conduct. There was nothing else. There were no other legislative things that we could charge him with. I had prepared my brief and had made some fairly good notes in my little police notebook. Con Zempilas was the magistrate on the day. I do not know whether members remember him. Old Con was an old-school magistrate. I was sitting at court and the offender was on his side of the bench when I gave my evidence-in-chief. The defendant started screaming, "What was her name?" I said that there was no way I was going to tell them that. He said, "It's in your notebook. I demand you tell us her name!" He started getting stroppier and stroppier, which is part of the intimidation that these individuals do. Mr Zempilas asked to see my notebook and I handed it up to the bench. He read it and said, "You know what, constable? You are right. She deserves her peace. She deserves her dignity. She deserves not to be named in this court case." He turned to the defendant and said, "And you, sir, are arguably one of the biggest mongrels I have ever seen in this place." Then he gave him the maximum fine that he could at the time.

As I said, when I talk about this issue, I would triple the 150 metres. I would take it even further. For the penalties involved, I would double it, because what those people did to that poor young girl, I will never forget. This is an important piece of legislation. Whether we get it through in this Parliament with the help of the upper house, I do not know. But if we do not get it through this time, we will get it up the next time because this is one of the good pieces of work that we do in this place.

I thank members and I commend the bill to the house.

**MS S.F. McGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Child Protection)** [1.14 pm]: I want to make a contribution to the second reading debate on the Public Health Amendment (Safe Access Zones) Bill 2020. First, I express my appreciation to the Minister for Health and his team for doing the work to get this bill before the Parliament. It is long overdue, but I am very proud that Labor has a commitment in this place for ensuring that women have genuine reproductive freedoms and choices in how they control their fertility. That, really, is at the heart of a civilised society, and gives women choices in their lives for not only their reproductive health, but also how they conduct their lives on the whole.

Many people have made the point that the bill before us does not make any changes to the decriminalisation of abortion, but the debate about the safe access zones cannot help but impinge on that question, because what the government is seeking to do in establishing safe access zones is reassert the protection of those people going to those clinics to seek services, whether it is women obtaining abortions with their family, supporters, partners or whether men are seeking other sexual health services available at those clinics, and, of course, the safety of the staff themselves.

I am proud to speak on this important bill because it will help end the harassment of women and medical staff at clinics by legislating these safe access zones.

As people have commented, the zones will operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week to protect members of the community from unnecessary interference as they seek medical services. It will be prohibited to harass or intimidate anyone accessing these premises; communicate with people, who are using the service, in a manner that is likely to cause distress; obstruct access to a service; and record, by any means, without consent.

WA lags behind the rest of the country, which has introduced safe access zones around clinics. I noticed in the speech from the member for Vasse that she was perhaps a little out of date. My understanding is that we are now the last state to change —

**Mr R.H. Cook:** I think that has just passed the South Australian Parliament.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** It has just passed in the South Australian Parliament, so the member is not too far off. It has just been enacted.

**Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup** interjected.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Sorry. It may be before the South Australian Parliament, but, in any case —

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L. Mettam):** That's what I said, minister.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** — it is beyond time for us to come into line with the best practice to protect Western Australian women.

The fundamental right to safety, privacy, dignity and respect when accessing health care should be fiercely protected. This extends to not only the patients, but also the dedicated staff who work at these facilities. Just as all workers have a right to a safe workplace, people who work at abortion clinics have the right to attend their workplace free from obstruction and harassment.

It is well understood that people in our community have strong views about abortion, and they are entitled to those views. This legislation seeks to neither interfere with those views nor prevent the right to conduct peaceful demonstration. This legislation puts in place protections to ensure that any protests or demonstrations are conducted in the appropriate places and in a way that does not harass or intimidate anyone seeking access to legal medical services.

As other speakers on this bill have outlined, up until 1998, abortion was illegal in this state; however, no women or doctors had been charged or convicted for procuring abortions for many years. However, in January 1998, two doctors were advised by the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions that they were to be charged for providing abortion services. This was despite growing momentum and long-held public opinion that women should have the right to make decisions about their own bodies, including to terminate a pregnancy if that is what they want to do.

As a result, activists including lawyers and pro-choice politicians and members of the community ramped up efforts to draft a bill to remove abortion from the Western Australian Criminal Code. Acknowledgement has been made in this debate of Hon Cheryl Davenport, then member of Legislative Council for the South Metropolitan Region, and her colleagues including Diana Warnock, the former member for Perth, as being instrumental in shepherding what would be a transformational piece of law reform to ensure that terminations are treated as a health and medical issue for women in Western Australia. Impressively, that team managed to achieve this law reform while in opposition through a private member's bill. The achievement was not only a testament to their skills in negotiation and policy development, but also the groundswell of public support for the decriminalisation of terminations.

The bill before the house does not deal with the established legality of terminations in our state. Instead, its purpose is to support this essential medical service through these provisions. Safe access zones are an important instrument to ensure that these hard-fought law reforms have appropriate protections in place for people accessing termination services. Since abortion was legalised in this state, the issue of protesters outside clinics approaching women who are accessing these services has been ongoing. The behaviour of protesters has a profound impact on patients, their supporters and staff working at the clinics. The behaviour of protesters has included verbal harassment, approaching patients trying to "counsel"—I use that word loosely—they about their decision with a view to them changing their mind, recording patients without their consent, forming intimidating groups that can range to over 40 people outside a clinic and creating a physical barrier for patients trying to enter a clinic. Placards that display confronting and often inaccurate images of embryos and fetuses coupled with inflammatory language also form part of these demonstrations.

The Department of Health's consultation process on this legislation received overwhelming support for these laws to be introduced in Western Australia. Of the more than 4 000 submissions, 70 per cent supported the establishment

of safe access zones. The consultation process also heard clear examples of unacceptable behaviour occurring outside facilities in Western Australia right now. Six hundred submissions commented that protesters increase the emotional distress of patients and over 100 submissions commented that patients face increased risk of mental health impacts due to protesters' behaviour. We heard the member for Burns Beach give an example of that from his time as a serving police officer. Submissions to the consultation process described interactions with protesters as traumatic, stressful, overwhelming, awful, horrible, painful, hard, scary, hurtful, confronting, upsetting, frightening, horrifying, disturbing and distressing.

It is noteworthy that the clinics in which abortions take place not only provide termination options, but also a range of essential family planning services, which may include sexual health services, contraception and sterilisation. Demonstrators outside these facilities impact on not only women seeking terminations, but also those seeking other family planning services, which has an impact on the physical, economic and social wellbeing of patients.

In its submission, the Castan Centre for Human Rights Law at Monash University commented that its research has found that in Western Australia two groups that frequent abortion clinics hand out goody bags containing food and lollies as an attempt to cancel procedures that require fasting and frustrate women's efforts to obtain lawful medical services. Acting Speaker, Western Australian women deserve better. They are entitled to seek essential medical services without facing harassment and without having their choices challenged. They deserve to be free from harassment and intimidation across all areas of their lives, including when they access medical services. The High Court of Australia made it clear that these zones have an important role to play in protecting women's right to access medical services safely. The High Court last year upheld that both the Victorian and the Tasmanian safe access zones were justified in limiting freedom in order to uphold the protection of the safety, wellbeing and privacy of women accessing medical services. These laws strike the right balance between the right to peacefully protest with the right of people, especially women, to access medical services.

For far too long Western Australians have had to experience abuse when accessing essential medical services. As the first Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence, I am well aware of the impact on women of abuse and how abuse occurs outside interpersonal relationships. Abuse in all its forms is unacceptable, and all too often women bear the burden of this in our society. As Minister for Women's Interests, I know that women's health and women's right to choose is fundamental to gender equality. Safe access zones will provide protection for women to ensure that they are safe and their privacy is upheld. Women have a right to access medical services and to have their choices respected. These are not easy choices. Termination services provide quality services to women to support them in these choices; they do not need another party or group expressing its views and calling that choice into question.

I am sorry that the member for Cottesloe has left the chamber, because I think it is important that he hears that point again. The member for Cottesloe made some points —

Several members interjected.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Thank you. Perhaps the member for Cottesloe could take the time to listen to these points. The member for Cottesloe made the point that he believes there might be an argument to say that some women may have been subject to harassment or pressure to go into the clinic and that women need protection against that. Perhaps the member could have taken the time to inform himself of the current legislation in Western Australia, which requires abortion clinics to provide information to women on the various options available to them before an induced abortion is provided. In Western Australia, abortion is available on request to women less than 20 weeks pregnant provided that informed consent has been given. When a woman is 20 weeks pregnant or more, there are further special requirements. "Informed consent" is defined under the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1911 as whether a medical practitioner, other than the medical practitioner performing or assisting with the abortion, has provided counselling to the woman about the medical risk of termination of a pregnancy and of carrying a pregnancy to term. This medical practitioner must also offer an opportunity of referral for counselling prior to and following a pregnancy termination or carrying a pregnancy to term.

**Dr D.J. Honey:** I just want to get some information. Are they given information about help services that are available, as in help or assistance that is available to them?

**Mr R.H. Cook:** Section 334 of the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act states that the doctor is required to.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Thank you. The Minister for Health has just given me a helpful reference to legislation that says that doctors are required to give patients that information. I think this is important not only to inform the member about this debate, but also so that members understand that the last people who should have any right, let alone the skills, to provide that sort of advice to women or anyone going into an abortion clinic are protesters outside a clinic. They are the last people. In fact, examples of people who may have been pressured into obtaining an abortion are often used as a convenient excuse for pro-life protesters to meet their ends.

Although we have been clear that we are talking about safe access zones and not the substance of the pro-abortion laws in Western Australia, the reality in the United States, for instance, is that it has not taken long for the extrapolation

to be made very widely and the debate to be held very fiercely in the public domain. In fact, given the current composition of the United States' Supreme Court, it is predicted that the 47-year-old *Roe v Wade* decision, which allows legal abortion in America, will be challenged. If the *Roe v Wade* decision is overturned, we can expect a large number of states in the US to seek to reverse the right for women to control their own fertility and the timing and number of children they have, and that will include the criminalisation of abortion. It has been widely discussed that that is a key agenda of the conservative right in the United States and is one of the reasons it backed the outgoing President of the United States, Donald Trump, even though he has demonstrated at every opportunity that his values are diametrically opposed to the values that many Christian-right advocates support.

When we are talking about safe access zones, we want our position on these principles to be crystal clear in Western Australia—that is, the right for women to control their own bodies, their fertility and the number and timing of any children they have, and their right to access abortion in an affordable and safe way. In fact, in the lead-up to this debate, I read a report from Amnesty International that made the point that women have abortions all the time, regardless of what the law says. Amnesty International estimates that a quarter of all pregnancies end in abortion. In fact, Amnesty International made the point that the number of abortions does not largely differ between countries or states that either criminalise or decriminalise abortion. The question is whether abortions are done safely and women are given proper counselling and support. These sentiments are diametrically opposed to those expressed by the religious right, who believe it is their duty and obligation to inflict their views on others. I am here to say on behalf of myself and many other women that we are not interested in having those views inflicted upon us. I am very proud of the Western Australian Labor government for bringing the Public Health Amendment (Safe Access Zones) Bill before Parliament.

**MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Minister for Health)** [1.33 pm] — in reply: I would like to take this opportunity to close off the second reading stage of this debate on the Public Health Amendment (Safe Access Zones) Bill 2020. I sincerely thank all members for their contributions. I think it is a testament to this place that so many perspectives can be brought forward, whether it is the perspective of those who have friends or relatives who have accessed abortion services or those who have—I am trying to put it as delicately as I can—more of a religious perspective, or those who have a law enforcement perspective. The contribution of the member for Burns Beach was very powerful in providing us with some insight into the context in which a lot of people access these legal medical services. I want to take the opportunity to thank everyone for their contribution—I mean that sincerely—and for the careful consideration they brought to this debate. I think it would be remiss of me not to mention the contribution from the member for Armadale, who provided us with a great legal lecture. I hope people were taking notes, ready for end-of-semester exams!

I want to go to the heart of one of the key issues that was raised in this debate—that is, the timing of this legislation. It is very important for people to note that the government has done nothing to dampen the speed with which it wanted this legislation to come to this place. The bill has simply been the victim of the constitutional processes, the parliamentary processes and, of course, the social and health context in which we are all operating. As the member for Swan Hills said, this is something I put on the agenda very early on in the piece, in early 2017. I expressed a personal view that I believed it was an important reform that we needed to consider in Western Australia. That position was endorsed by the state Labor Party later in 2017. However, soon after that it became very clear that the legislation in Tasmania and Victoria would be challenged. As impatient as I am often accused of being with these processes, we simply had to wait and see the outcome of the challenge to the Victorian legislation in particular. As a result, we had to spend the best part of 2018 and early 2019 waiting for those legal processes to be resolved. In April 2019, the High Court decision was handed down. Following that decision and the affirmation of the validity of the Victorian legislation, as fast as we could, we published a discussion paper around which our public consultation would take place. Many people have acknowledged the exhaustive consultation that took place around this legislation. I thank them, because I am very proud of the work the Department of Health did to make sure it got good community perspectives and good community buy-in to this legislation.

A number of members have acknowledged the amount of feedback the department received. There was overwhelming feedback that people supported this legislation in this form and thought it should be brought forward and considered by the Parliament. In February this year, the WA government committed to legislating safe access zones but, of course, as everyone is aware, we then had the global COVID-19 pandemic. It will not surprise members to hear that our entire parliamentary counsel resources—that is, the resources we use to draft regulations, laws and directions under the Emergency Management Act—were consumed by the task of dealing with COVID-19. Indeed, the Department of Health shelved a lot of policy initiatives to make sure that all guns were blazing on the existential threat we were all experiencing from COVID-19. We have brought this legislation to this place at the earliest possible opportunity. I would have loved to introduce this legislation earlier this year, as we are all well aware of the importance of finding a legislative solution to this problem, but, unfortunately, COVID-19 and the High Court challenge simply meant that that was not possible. However, we have now brought it here. The member for Cottesloe asked why it was not on our list of priority legislation. We know that we have a limited number of sitting days in both this and the other place. Obviously, we could not put something down as a piece of priority legislation when it has not even been considered by this Parliament yet, but the other issue is that we have other legislation

that we need to consider as well. We have to strike a balance with other COVID laws, legislation which is already on foot and legislation such as the passing of the state budget. They obviously take precedence over this legislation. We could put this in as a priority piece—we could put it in as the biggest priority for the government—but we know what will happen, because we have seen it happen time and again. Socially progressive legislation gets frustrated and stymied in the other place through the course of the debate, particularly by individuals within the upper house who are part of the dominant faction inside the Liberal Party nowadays—the extreme religious right, which is now dominating that house.

**Dr D.J. Honey** interjected.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** I assume that the member for Cottesloe is a member. I know that the member for Dawesville is not a member of that faction, but we sometimes wonder about the member for Cottesloe. The member for Cottesloe is a thoroughly decent individual, but we do wonder about his allegiances within the party.

I want to address some of the issues raised by members, in particular the members for Dawesville and Central Wheatbelt, who raised some important issues that I wish to now clarify. The member for Dawesville raised concerns about the possible need for signage or demarcation around abortion clinics. As part of the implementation process, all health services in WA that provide abortion services will be notified and provided with information to assist them to prepare their premises if they wish to. Specific decisions regarding potential signage that could be added outside an abortion clinic is to be left to the discretion of the service being protected. Depending on the location of the clinic, the area around it that falls within a safe access zone might be public land managed by a relevant local government. If any signage or demarcation might be needed, it would be something for the clinic to discuss with the relevant local government and WA Police Force. I would like to stress that we are not aware of official demarcation or signs being used around abortion clinics in other jurisdictions. Also, that type of signage could potentially attract more attention to those abortion clinics, which might work against the purpose of the bill, which is to provide privacy for and protect the dignity of people who need to access those clinics. Therefore, those types of measures will need to be considered carefully as part of the implementation phase of the legislation.

The member for Dawesville also raised a concern—I think this is a really important point—about ordinary people making recordings within safe access zones and publishing them on an online platform such as TikTok, which the member referred to in a way that gave me the impression of a somewhat mature individual back in the 1950s referring to “that rock music”.

**Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup:** It’s a little too young for me!

**Mr R.H. COOK:** All that “A-wop-bop-a-loo-bop” stuff. “I’m not quite sure what it is, but this TikTok thing, which I understand involves videos”, says the member for Dawesville. The member for Dawesville is the TikTok generation—please!

**Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup:** It’s younger than me!

**Mr R.H. COOK:** Embrace your generation!

**Mr A. Krsticevic** interjected.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** The member for Carine is definitely not the TikTok generation, and I strongly advise him to avoid such social media forums. The point the member for Dawesville is making is that a person could unintentionally capture someone’s image and therefore identify them, essentially by mistake, and therefore potentially fall foul of the legislation. I want to emphasise that the proposed section, which is clause 202Q in the bill, sets out several tests that will need to be met before someone might commit the publishing offence. The offence requires that the recording contains particulars that are likely to lead to the identification of the woman as someone accessing premises at which abortions are provided. A recording that unintentionally captures a woman in the background who might be walking along the street towards an abortion clinic, for instance, is unlikely to be captured as an offence under the bill, unless, for example, the person who has taken the video specifically describes her as someone who is heading towards an abortion clinic to undergo an abortion. The simple concept of filming someone in the street outside of that context would not fall foul of that provision. In addition, the offence provision contains a “reasonable excuse” exemption, which, if needed, would also cover and exclude various scenarios such as the one the member raised.

The member for Dawesville also raised the issue of a lack of a mechanism in the bill to extend or reduce the size of a safe access zone. Submissions during the community consultation process indicated significant support for a zone of no less than 150 metres. We do not want WA to have less protection than the norm in most states. I think the member for Burns Beach made the observation that he would not mind if it was three times the distance of 150 metres. Certainly, we consider the location of the main private abortion providers in WA and the patients and staff who access these services. Although we understand that a distance of 150 metres may not cover all patient and staff access points to premises at which abortions are provided, a zone that was larger than 150 metres would make it harder for demonstrators to distinguish patients and staff from a passer-by. The vast majority of jurisdictions in Australia did not identify any need to include such a mechanism in the legislation. The distance of 150 metres is essentially consistent with legislation in other states.

The member for Central Wheatbelt sought clarification on the rationale behind the penalties prescribed in the bill. The proposed penalties reflect the potentially serious nature of offences such as intimidating, harassing and recording people who are accessing abortion services for the purpose of shaming and humiliating them. The penalties are broadly consistent with the safe access zone laws introduced around the country. The proposed fines are in the mid-range of penalties applicable to safe access zone offences in other jurisdictions and the imprisonment penalty is consistent with the majority of other jurisdictions. The proposed penalties are also consistent with the penalties under the Criminal Investigation Act 2006 for breaching a move-on order. A maximum of 12 months' imprisonment penalty will also enable WA police to obtain identifying particulars from an adult if there is a need for that. It is also important to stress that the penalties attached to the offences prescribed in the bill are maximum penalties, and the judiciary has discretion about which sentence to impose. The police are not obliged to proceed with those penalties in the first instance that something occurs; they have the ability to caution people or give a move-on notice. Therefore, we took the view that the penalties are proportionate to the nature of the conduct that we are wishing to address.

The member for Central Wheatbelt also raised the issue of why the legislation has taken so long to come to this place. I think I have covered that in the context of the journey on which this legislation has been. The member sought advice on challenges in other legislation and how they were remedied. Those were resolved in the High Court.

I also want to acknowledge the member for Central Wheatbelt's recognition of Trevor Khan in New South Wales. Mr Khan was instrumental in the success of the Public Health Amendment (Safe Access to Reproductive Health Clinics) Bill 2018 in New South Wales and co-sponsored the bill in that state. Equally, apparently the support of the Country Women's Association in New South Wales was also critical to the success of the passage of the safe access zones bill in New South Wales.

I will briefly touch on the member for Armadale's contribution to this debate. As I said, he distinguished himself, as one would expect an academic law lecturer to do. I will not go over the High Court ruling in detail as I think that has already been well summarised, but I share his desire that we do not become like America and allow behaviour outside abortion clinics to escalate. An article in *The New York Times* in November 2015 titled "A Brief History of Deadly Attacks on Abortion Providers" stated that between 1993 and 2015, 11 people were killed in deliberate attacks on clinics. Let us not embrace that future.

One of the other points the member for Armadale made—I paraphrase him—was that he did not understand the objective behind protesting outside clinics: it does not change the laws. That is a telling observation. It simply traumatises and often re-traumatises women who have already made the difficult decision to attend the clinic. As reaffirmed by others, safe access zones do not prevent protesters from protesting; it just means that protesting outside clinics is not the place to do that. People should focus on the issue, not the individuals. The member for Mirrabooka said that if people want to enter the political arena, they should do so in an appropriate forum. Outside abortion clinics that people have to attend to obtain a legal medical service is not the place to undertake that sort of political debate.

On the subject of sidewalk counselling, as the member for Mirrabooka pointed out, counselling is supposed to be a voluntary service that people seek when they want it, not something that is thrust upon them unsolicited. With regard to the member for Cottesloe's concerns about women experiencing abortion against their will, section 334 of the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act provides that a doctor is required to counsel women on the possible side effects of the termination as well as the potential risks and complications involved in continuing with a pregnancy, and the doctor must offer women counselling if they would like it, and let them know about counselling that is available pre-termination and post-abortion. There is also a requirement for women to give informed consent before an abortion is performed. We must always remember that all individuals involved in a therapeutic relationship must do so in an ethical way and in a way that does not compromise the opportunity for people to make decisions.

I thank the member for Morley for her remarks about the reproductive rights of women and the importance of those rights being asserted in law, and also for her observation—this point was made also by the member for Swan Hills—about the impact of the previous government's decision to award a contract to a provider that could not provide full services within a health service. I think the solution the Barnett government came up with under the circumstances was as good as it could get, off the back of what was a lamentable decision in the first instance. I commend the people at Marie Stopes Australia for the work they do.

I loved the member for Belmont's observation that this legislation is good commonsense: this is just what well-meaning people would put in place to make sure that people can avoid the dreadful experience of being harassed when accessing those services. I commend her for bringing to this place strong, personal experiences of intimidation and trauma.

The member for Southern River highlighted the importance of the impact on staff. We should not underestimate the impact felt by healthcare workers who provide a very important service. They should not be humiliated, attacked and victimised when providing a therapeutic service. The member for Burns Beach eloquently described, through his personal experiences, why we simply cannot rely on current laws to provide the protections we need and why, as a result, this legislation needs to be brought forward.

I thank all members for their contributions. This goes beyond the parties. I thank the Labor Party and the Nationals WA for committing to this legislation as blocs within this place. I implore all members of the other political parties who have committed themselves to a conscience vote to examine their conscience and to accept that this is important legislation. As many members have said, the legislation is about compassion and providing people with the right to access a legal health and medical service and, as a result of that, they should be protected and they should enjoy the full protection of all of us in this place under the laws that we can provide.

I commend the bill to the house.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

Leave granted to proceed forthwith to third reading.

*Third Reading*

**MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Minister for Health)** [1.55 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a third time.

**MR Z.R.F. KIRKUP (Dawesville)** [1.55 pm]: Noting the time, it is important to reflect that earlier I indicated to the government that the opposition would not go into consideration in detail. I appreciate the need for the Public Health Amendment (Safe Access Zones) Bill 2020 to be dealt with before question time today. I will not slow down that process, largely because a lot of the concerns I raised in my speech were answered by the Minister for Health, particularly about signage and the nature of recording somebody on a phone. I appreciate that specific circumstances would need to be raised for that to become a concern.

I note also that the reduction or expansion of the zones is largely based on the Queensland Law Reform Commission report that states that that option should be available to the Queensland government. I can imagine the circumstances that might exist in Western Australia. Currently, we are essentially legislating for two private operators, in Rivervale and Midland, but other private clinics may operate from time to time in the future and the need might arise for ministerial discretion over those zones. Any suggestions from me are based entirely on my support for that, but observations were made by the Queensland Law Reform Commission. I appreciate the contributions of members opposite. I will not buy into some of the language they used about the factions of parties. I think that is an unnecessary burden on what is otherwise important legislation that I commend to the house.

**MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Minister for Health)** [1.57 pm] — in reply: I thank the member for Dawesville for his contribution and I acknowledge his support and the support of the member for Vasse; they both stood in this place to commit themselves to the legislation. As I said, it is very important legislation. I hope it will rise above the troubled waters of politics, but even legislation of this importance could be caught up in the choppy froth of legislative debate. It would be lovely to think that we could consider this legislation in full before the election. Lamentably, I think we will lose that opportunity, but that is okay because the Parliament has today demonstrated that this bill has widespread support. If the Labor Party is lucky enough to be on these benches in this place after the next election following the verdict of the Western Australian people, we will obviously bring in this legislation forthwith and ensure that it is made law as early as possible in 2021. Should we not be so lucky, I am confident that those on the other side will take the opportunity to secure this thoroughly decent legislation for the women of Western Australia, ensuring that they have the proper protections to access legal medical procedures that they deserve—albeit, as the member for Dawesville observed, in one of just two places in Western Australia. Because this process is rare, we should have legislation to ensure the protection of those who access those services.

Nearly all speakers have carried themselves with dignity during this debate, and that is a very important point. If there is the opportunity for the bill to pass speedily through the other place, I am sure the offer will be made by the parliamentary leaders there, having observed the widespread support that this legislation has received in this place. In conclusion, I commend this bill to the house.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

**CHINA — TRADE RELATIONS**

**885. Mrs L.M. HARVEY to the Premier:**

Can the Premier update the house on the status of trade issues with China, including the status of issues with the barley, crayfish and wine industries?

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members, please!

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

As members would know, there have been many public concerns about a range of industries and the potential impact of steps being taken across the board on exports into China. China is our biggest trading partner. On an annual basis, in fact over the last year, we exported over \$100 billion worth of products into China. That is around half of our state's annual exports. As Western Australia produces around 40 to 50 per cent of the nation's exports, that is 25 per cent or thereabouts of the nation's total exports. The state imports around \$4 billion worth of products out of China, so the trade surplus between Western Australia and China is \$96 billion. Treasury estimates that that equates to around one-quarter of the employment in WA, so over 200 000 jobs are dependent upon this relationship.

There have obviously been some concerns expressed about the products the Leader of the Opposition asked about. I think the situation is quite fluid and, as yet, where it will land has not been finally determined. Clearly, we have concerns on behalf of crayfishers, barley farmers and wine exporters. I have expressed those concerns on multiple occasions to the Prime Minister. I have offered to help in any way that we can. I have contacted and been contacted by industry leaders across Western Australia—to be honest, they are some of the most significant industry leaders in Australia—and there is broad concern about this relationship.

It is not as though the nation cannot balance two things. We need to be able to balance our alliance and investment relationship with the United States with our trading relationship with China. Both things need to be able to continue. It is not as though by giving up trade with China we are somehow going to score some huge geopolitical victory. All that will happen if our wine stops being exported to China is that Californian wine will fill its place. If our barley stops going to China, American barley will fill the void. If our grain stops going to China, American grain will go there. If our beef stops going there, American beef will go there. It is not as though the United States will suddenly say that it will not take that market. The American position has been that it needs to rebalance its trading relationship with China, so it wants to take market share from other countries around the world. If our country deliberately loses market share, the United States will pick it up—why would it not? How will that achieve anything? Can anyone explain to me how that will achieve anything, apart from costing us jobs and national income?

I have expressed my view to the Prime Minister on a number of occasions. I express my view about this to any federal minister I meet. I had recent meetings with the Chinese consul and we discussed these matters. The Minister for Fisheries met with the Chinese consul recently about the crayfish issue. We are doing everything we can as a state to ensure that we have a rational policy for trade and we continue to protect Western Australia jobs.

## CHINA — TRADE RELATIONS

**886. Mrs L.M. HARVEY to the Premier:**

I have a supplementary question. Has the Premier used his personal and industry links with China to argue for a better deal for Western Australian primary producers; and, if not, why not?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

Once again, I do not get how, after four years, the Leader of the Opposition does not listen to the answer and then recalibrate her supplementary question based on what I have just said. I will repeat it to her: I have spoken to and communicated with the Prime Minister on numerous occasions about this issue—and I mean numerous. He and I have regular discussions about it. He has a bit of a different view from me. My view is very much based upon the fact that I have been a long-term supporter of the US alliance. I have served with US service people, actually, at various points in time. I have gone to sea on American warships. I know a little bit about the American alliance. I have been a long-term supporter of it. But we cannot just say that we have an alliance; therefore, we are going to trash our trading relationship. How does that help us? How does that help our country? We live in the best state in a remarkable country. We are a very, very affluent people. Working people in this country have the best conditions and incomes of anywhere in the world—small business people, working people, ordinary people. This is an egalitarian country that does extremely well by world standards. What is that based upon? It is based upon successful industries and the fact that we can sell the products that we produce to other countries around the world. The major country that we sell those products to is China.

We have a diversification strategy. We are trying to diversify as much as we can around the world, but when the largest market for some products—in fact, virtually the only market for some products—is China, where do we diversify to? I had a meeting with a US congressman a couple of years ago. He said that we needed to sell iron ore elsewhere. I asked him where and he did not have an answer. There are not any other Chinas. There is Japan, which has one-tenth of the population of China—a bit less. There is Korea, which has one-twentieth the population of China. There is the United States. China produces 12 times as much steel as the United States, and half of the steel that the United States produces is recycled steel, so its iron ore consumption is about 50 million tonnes per year. Chinese consumption of iron ore is about 900 million tonnes per year. That is what we are dealing with. My view is that we need to be pragmatic and rational, and we need to act in the interests of Western Australians and our jobs. If we do not and if we lose these international markets, particularly our biggest market, it is a recipe for a loss of national income, unemployment and reduced living standards in this country.

**VISITOR — BRUNSWICK JUNCTION PRIMARY SCHOOL***Statement by Speaker*

**THE SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson)** [2.08 pm]: Before we go on to the next question, I would like to welcome to the Assembly chamber Ms Nicol and the year 6 student leaders from Brunswick Junction Primary School on behalf of the member for Murray–Wellington.

**CORONAVIRUS — STATE ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN — TAFE****887. Ms S.E. WINTON to the Premier:**

Before I ask my question, on behalf of the member for Southern River I would like to welcome students from Ashburton Drive Primary School to Parliament today.

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to driving WA's economic recovery by supporting local jobs through its record investment in TAFE and training. Can the Premier outline to the house how this investment will ensure that more Western Australians can access the skills and training they need to enter the workforce?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

I thank the member for Wanneroo for the question. Western Australian jobs have been our number one priority. Over the course of this year we have been very focused on ensuring that we keep Western Australia not only safe but also strong. The government has put unprecedented investment into TAFEs and training. When we came into office, we froze TAFE fees across the board. During the term of the last government, TAFE fees had undergone massive increases—over 500 per cent for many, many courses—across the board. When we came to office, we froze TAFE fees. More recently—last year—we managed to slash TAFE fees for 34 high-priority qualifications. Then, more recently, as part of our recovery plan, the fees for another 39 high-priority courses were slashed by up to 72 per cent. More recently—two weeks ago—we followed up with a massive reduction in fees for another 107 TAFE courses. The stage government has made the last lot of cuts to fees in conjunction with the commonwealth government; that is a \$103.4 million investment. The 107 TAFE courses that now have reduced fees will deliver training in sectors, including building and construction, manufacturing, mining, engineering, aquaculture, agriculture, horticulture, information technology and logistics. The fee reductions that we put in place in conjunction with the commonwealth will come in on 1 January 2021.

That means we are driving more opportunities for Western Australians to get trained in courses for which there are jobs in Western Australia. We have seen an incredibly strong take-up of courses across the state. The enrolments in many courses have increased by 20 per cent—in fact, it is higher in some courses. Some courses, particularly those that will get people back into the workforce, are completely free. This is an important initiative for training.

On top that, the government has put \$229 million into TAFE capital works across the state. TAFE colleges are old. In particular, workshops across the state that are not in the best condition will undergo massive improvements. I have been out and visited a number of them. In Kalgoorlie, for instance, there have been some amazing upgrades as part of this.

Obviously, that is a big change from what happened during the course of the last government, when TAFE fees were put up massively. During the last government, fees for an Advanced Diploma of Building Surveying went up by 787 per cent; fees for a certificate IV in fitness—Mr Speaker, I know you are interested in that—had a 470 per cent increase; and a course in education support had a 387 per cent increase in fees. Fees to undertake a Diploma of Civil and Structural Engineering went up by 290 per cent, while fees for an Advanced Diploma of Hospitality Management went up by 284 per cent. There are so many examples out there of fees that just went through the roof. Enrolments dropped and Western Australians were not being trained for the jobs that are out there in this state.

This government will continue to train Western Australians and provide the best TAFE opportunities of anywhere in the country. We are ensuring that Western Australians can take advantage of the jobs that are available in Western Australia.

**CORONAVIRUS — TESTING — WASTEWATER****888. Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP to the Minister for Health:**

I refer to the opposition's calls in May for COVID-19 sewage testing and note that there has still been no active testing of the state sewerage system since that time. When will the Minister for Health provide an update to the house on what date sewage testing will commence in Western Australia? I am referring to not only hotel testing, but also community testing, as we asked for back in May.

**Mr R.H. COOK replied:**

I thank the member for the question. We come across many people who have opinions on the COVID-19 pandemic, but none of them necessarily like to politicise it in the way that the member for Dawesville does. It is incredible. We have had so much success around the COVID-19 pandemic. The Western Australian public has been incredible in the way that it has got behind all the measures that we have needed to take to make sure that we get on top of this disease. The only people in the state who have not got behind it are our friends opposite. They continue to politicise. They continue to snipe and be negative.

The work that the government has done around COVID-19 is a cause for celebration by the WA community. The wastewater testing, which we have commenced, is a way of continuing to add to our armoury of defences against this disease, whether it is testing, contact tracing, isolating people in hotels and making sure that people in the community do all the things we know are necessary, such as physical distancing, personal hygiene and making sure that if we are sick, we get ourselves tested and stay away from school or work. We know that all those things have been a great part of our success. But we also want to make sure that we do other things and inform ourselves on all the measures that we have available to us. Wastewater testing is another way that we can step forward.

A hallmark of the government's approach to the COVID-19 pandemic has been to back the science, to back the evidence that builds that science and to make sure that we take careful, cautious steps in protecting the people of Western Australia. A partnership between the Department of Health, PathWest and the Water Corporation has been carefully examining historical samples of wastewater to make sure that we understand what a presence of the disease in those tests means. If we have a positive test, for instance in Albany, what does that mean? Does it mean that there is an outbreak in that community or that someone is continuing to shed the disease, is no longer infectious and may already have completed their journey with the disease? We need to understand the science that backs up wastewater testing, which is the difference between what we have done and what perhaps has been done in other jurisdictions.

I am very pleased to report to the house that that testing and scientific work has been done and we are now undertaking live testing at hotel precincts and across five metropolitan wastewater treatment plants as part of our live program of continuing to test wastewater. It will be really important work, but it is not the only work. Other measures that we have put in place are obviously important in making sure that we continue to stay on top of the COVID-19 pandemic. We will continue to do so, because we are following the science and the medical advice, and we are taking a cautious approach to COVID-19. That has been the hallmark of the Premier's leadership, which has helped to ensure that people get their jobs back, businesses are up and running again, and communities are brought back together. It has been very successful.

#### CORONAVIRUS — TESTING — WASTEWATER

##### **889. Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP to the Minister for Health:**

I have a supplementary question. Given that every other state and territory in the country has been doing sewage testing for some time, will the Minister for Health provide a date to the house when towns like Albany can experience the benefits of having sewage testing for COVID-19? It is occurring in every other place in the country but is yet to be done under this government.

##### **Mr R.H. COOK replied:**

Member for Dawesville, get on board "Team WA". For once, member for Dawesville, just be one of us—just be a Western Australian for a change, rather than continuing to snipe, look elsewhere and take your lead from other states. The fact of the matter is that other states did early testing, but that does not mean anything. We have continued to make sure —

**Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Dawesville!

**Mr R.H. COOK:** I remind the member for Dawesville and his colleague the Premier of New South Wales that we do not have any disease in this state. That so-called rolled-gold jurisdiction of New South Wales is the only one that is getting outbreaks of the disease. We hope that it gets on top of the Moss Vale outbreak. We hope that they resolve those mystery cases.

**Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup:** Don't politicise it! That's exactly what you do.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Dawesville, I will politicise this. I call you to order for the first time.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** He is very touchy! The fact of the matter is that Victoria, Queensland, the Northern Territory, that great Liberal jurisdiction South Australia and, of course, the Liberal jurisdiction of Tasmania have all got the disease under control. We look forward to New South Wales joining the ranks of those like us who have defeated community spread of the disease. I am sure by that stage that the member for Dawesville will have cottoned on to the fact that Western Australia arrived at this place many months ago.

#### SOUTH COAST HIGHWAY — UPGRADE

##### **890. Mrs R.M.J. CLARKE to the Minister for Transport:**

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to supporting local jobs and local businesses through its record investment in regional roads.

- (1) Can the minister update the house on the work underway on upgrading South Coast Highway?
- (2) Can the minister outline to the house how this and other transport projects across regional WA are helping to support the state's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI replied:**

(1)–(2) I thank the member for Murray–Wellington for the question. Of course, Mr Speaker, I joined your good self in Albany this morning to turn the sod on stage 3 of our \$30 million upgrade to South Coast Highway. At the last election, we committed \$30 million to upgrade South Coast Highway. The works that we are commencing now include widening and reconstruction works, and the construction of two new passing lanes between Bluff Creek and Kojaneerup West Roads. These projects will commence today and will finish in May next year.

**Mr F.M. Logan:** Well done, minister!

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** Thank you! I am glad someone is giving me credit for this.

**Mr P.C. Tinley:** You deserve it!

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** Thank you.

Stage 1, the Mead Road section, has been completed. That includes widening the pavement from seven to 11 metres. Stage 2, the Kalgan section, has also been completed. Western Australian company Ertech Pty Ltd was announced as the successful contractor for stage 3. As I said, the works commenced today and will be finished in May 2021. This road services a lot of the tourism community, and of course the farming community. It is really servicing freight movements, and also tourism and caravanners and tourists all up. It is an essential upgrade. Of course, other major projects are happening in Albany. Works are progressing on the Albany ring-road. That project will basically create over 1 000 jobs, together with all the other jobs in the community.

Unlike the National Party, we have always supported spending on roads, members. We did not think it was not a priority to spend on roads. That is why we have incredible expenditure across the state. Whether it is in Geraldton, on Brand Highway or Indian Ocean Drive, or through the Kimberley and the Pilbara, there are works absolutely everywhere.

This is a government committed to regional road safety and spending on roads. We do not need bumper stickers to tell us how to prioritise our expenditure. Spending in regional WA is in our DNA.

Several members interjected.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** It is in our DNA. We do not need bumper stickers to remind us.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members, I want to hear this. This is good news.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** We do not need bumper stickers to remind us that we have to spend money in regional WA. That is what we do in regional road spending. I do not know why National Party members take issue with us. I do not know why they take issue with the Labor Party. I do not know why they take issue with me or the Premier in this place. The National Party's problem is not on this side of the chamber. The problem is the person who normally sits behind the Leader of the National Party, the member for North West Central, Vince Catania, who is creating division in the National Party and intimidating and bullying members of the National Party. The question is, Leader of the National Party —

*Point of Order*

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Mr Speaker, I think the minister is bringing someone's name into disrepute.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Minister, just get back on track, please.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** Sure. The question for the National Party is: is he worth it? As has been demonstrated, that member is creating division and intimidating and bullying members. On this side of the house, we are concentrating on delivering —

*Point of Order*

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Mr Speaker, I refer to your ruling a moment ago to the minister to get back to the topic. She has strayed back onto discussing a member of the National Party again, contrary to your order.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** The minister will get back to the topic.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** On this side, we are focusing on delivering in regional WA key infrastructure, key roads and road safety improvements.

## ON-FARM EMERGENCY WATER INFRASTRUCTURE REBATE SCHEME

**891. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Minister for Water:**

I refer to the additional \$50 million funding made available by the federal government for the on-farm emergency water infrastructure rebate scheme to support communities in drought.

- (1) When will the minister stop making excuses and match commonwealth funds that are available to support farmers in water-deficient areas, including the 411 applications that his department has already processed but not paid out?
- (2) Once the minister finally decides to match the funding, will he work with me to help change the guidelines to include much-needed catchment works?

**Mr D.J. KELLY replied:**

(1)–(2) I am very happy that the member for Roe asked me that question—very happy indeed—and I will tell him why. The chamber might be interested in this. The federal government introduced a scheme called the on-farm emergency infrastructure rebate scheme, through which farmers can apply for up to 25 per cent of the cost of doing work on their property to improve water resilience. Farmers can get up to \$25 000 for each application. The member opposite has raised this issue a number of times. He raised it on 14 October this year, when he said —

When will the state government reopen the scheme for WA farmers and begin processing previously received applications to allow farmers to implement water-saving measures ahead of the summer?

He went on in a supplementary question to say —

I support getting that money straight out.

He then raised it in budget estimates, and in particular he raised the issue of the 401 applicants who have currently put in applications but no funding is available to them. He has raised it again today. What the member has not identified, and what I am now aware of, is that he is one of the applicants.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr D.J. KELLY:** The advice I have received from the department is that the member is one of the outstanding applicants.

**Mr M. McGowan:** Did you declare that?

**Mr D.J. KELLY:** Is that correct, member?

**The SPEAKER:** Through the Chair, please.

**Mr D.J. KELLY:** The member has just confirmed that he is in fact one of the applicants. Not only is he one of the outstanding applicants, he applied in the first round, which was previously funded, and he has received an amount of money. I have no problem with that. What I do have a problem with is a member coming into this place and arguing for the state government to facilitate that federal grant scheme by providing taxpayers' money —

**Mr D.T. Redman** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Warren–Blackwood!

**Mr D.J. KELLY:** He has come into this place —

**Ms M.J. Davies** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Leader of the National Party!

**Mr D.J. KELLY:** Was the Leader of the National Party aware that the member for Roe was coming into this place, arguing —

**The SPEAKER:** Minister, through the Chair; and quiet, please. You have asked a question. Hear the answer.

**Mr D.J. KELLY:** The member for Roe has come into this place, arguing for taxpayers' money to be expended on a grants program when he is one of the outstanding applicants. As a rural producer, he may be eligible for that grants program, but he should have indicated to the house —

**Mr D.T. Redman:** Did you take the \$600 electricity rebate? Did the Premier take the electricity rebate?

**Mr D.J. KELLY:** Come on!

**Mr D.T. Redman** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Warren–Blackwood, I call you to order for the first time.

**Mr D.T. Redman** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Warren–Blackwood, I call you to order for the second time.

**Mr D.T. Redman** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Warren–Blackwood, I called you to order for the first time, and you did not hear. I called you to order for the second time. Now I am calling you to order for the third time. I was on my feet and you were still talking across the chamber.

What is wrong with you, member for Cottesloe? Do you have an affliction there, or what? I call you to order for the third time.

**Mr D.J. KELLY:** The member for Roe should have come into this place and acknowledged that he is one of a relatively small—in fact, about 400—outstanding applicants for this grant fund. Not everybody is going to get it, like the \$600 electricity credit, which people do not have to apply for. He has an outstanding application with the department, which is on hold, and which he has now raised not once, not twice, but three times in this place, without declaring that he has a financial interest.

**Ms M.J. Davies** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Leader of the National Party, I call you to order for the first time.

**Mr D.J. KELLY:** Not once, not twice, but three times he has come into this place and raised an issue, and argued that Western Australian taxpayers' funds should be expended, when he is a direct financial beneficiary of that scheme. That is not the standard that members should display in this house. Politicians are often accused by members of the public of coming into this place to feather their own nests. The member for Roe should have done the right thing and informed the house that he was a direct beneficiary of what he was arguing for and then there could have been no complaint. But he did not. The question for the National Party is: is this the standard that it will permit? Is this the standard that the National Party will walk by? Is it okay for the National Party to allow members to come into this house and pursue a personal financial interest?

Member for Roe, the issue of getting financial assistance to farmers who are struggling because of the lack of rain in certain parts of Western Australia is a very serious one. I met with the federal Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management and the federal Minister for Resources and Water via Zoom this week to try to get some funds out of that federal program. On this side of the house, we are doing everything we can to assist those farmers. But the member for Roe coming in here and raising this issue without declaring his financial interests does not do those farmers any good and does the member harm.

**Ms M.J. Davies:** You're a grub.

*Withdrawal of Remark*

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The Leader of the Nationals WA used an inappropriate term, and I ask her to withdraw it.

**The SPEAKER:** I did not hear it.

Government members: I heard it.

**The SPEAKER:** No, I am just asking.

**Ms M.J. Davies:** It was consistent with other language that has been used in this Parliament many times, Mr Speaker.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** You have had a bad day. Just withdraw.

**The SPEAKER:** Excuse me! I did not hear what it was.

**Ms M.J. Davies:** I said the Minister for Water was a grub!

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** I do not think that is —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** I do not think it is unparliamentary, but I would not use it very often—put it that way.

**Ms M.J. Davies:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

**The SPEAKER:** Is anyone going to ask a question?

Several members interjected.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Mr Speaker.

Several members interjected.

**Mrs L.M. Harvey:** Four hundred farmers are waiting for action.

**The SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition, I was on my feet. I call you to order for the first time. Member for Roe.

## ON-FARM EMERGENCY WATER INFRASTRUCTURE REBATE SCHEME

**892. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Minister for Water:**

I have a supplementary question. Minister, all I am asking for on behalf of all our farmers is the opportunity to — Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** — match that funding. Thank you.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Minister for Energy, I call you to order for the first time. You have had your go. Let it go. Let the member for Roe have his answer.

**Mr D.J. KELLY replied:**

Member for Roe, I am not going to answer your question until you stand up and give an account of your own personal financial interests in this matter. That is what you need to do. You need to clear the record and give an account of your own personal financial interest in this matter before you speak on this matter again in the house.

And I did that without calling him a grub!

**The SPEAKER:** You might have not done that, Minister for Water, but I will call you to order for the first time. You just cannot shout across the chamber.

## HOSPITALS — EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS — INVESTMENT

**893. Mrs L.M. O'MALLEY to the Minister for Health:**

I refer to the work of the McGowan Labor government in ensuring that Western Australia is kept safe and strong through its significant investment in hospitals across the state.

- (1) Can the minister update the house on this government's investment in upgrading our emergency departments, and outline how this is supporting the delivery of high-quality health care in our hospitals?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how this investment is also supporting local jobs and local businesses as we recover from the economic impacts of COVID-19?

**Mr R.H. COOK replied:**

I thank the member for the question.

- (1)–(2) It is an important one because we all know at this time that our emergency departments continue to be drawn on and the demand is high, but we also know that our emergency departments are our frontline workers: doctors, nurses and allied health staff who are performing outstanding roles for Western Australians day in, day out. It is important that we have a government that stands by them and puts patients first and makes sure that we can continue to invest in our hospital system so that it can serve the Western Australian community into the future. I am particularly proud of the McGowan government's investment in our emergency departments to allow them to continue to expand and increase their capacity.

In particular, I want to go through just a few of those infrastructure changes that have allowed emergency departments to continue to meet the demands of our community. Work has already been completed in 2020 at the Royal Perth Hospital, including the construction of two single rooms within the quick assessment care unit as well as the conversion of six critical care bays into single rooms, which will enable the emergency department to treat patients requiring isolation from other patients. Obviously, this is crucial in times of COVID-19.

We have already implemented a mental health observation area at Royal Perth Hospital as well as undertaking a \$1.4 million investment in infrastructure works within the Royal Perth Hospital emergency department, which will commence early next year, to enhance patient flow and provide better patient experience. This includes additional consulting rooms in the psychiatric assessment unit, increased treatment space in the quick assessment area, combined clerk and triage areas and an enhanced secure entrance to the emergency department.

Other hospitals are also enjoying additional expenditure. That includes Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital—our other very busy hospital. It has \$19 million in upgrades to enhance the patient experience and improve the safety of patients and staff at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. That includes a new eight-bed behaviour assessment unit, which will improve patient and clinical outcomes for patients affected by alcohol and/or other drugs. Relocation of the ED fast-track area will help ensure patients are able to be seen within the ED without entering the ED main department; and a class Q quarantine room within the ED to improve infection control.

Mental health and COVID-19 respiratory illness and infectious diseases remain ongoing challenges for our EDs, and these upgrades continue to equip them to make sure that they can meet the demands of the future.

The member for Armadale, and perhaps begrudgingly the member for Dawesville, will be pleased to hear that our \$5 million upgrades to the Peel Health Campus ED are continuing and will be completed by January 2021. That includes a new fast-track ambulatory area to improve patient triage, new holding bays, a new waiting area as well as the addition of seven beds in the short-stay unit to further streamline patient flow.

In addition to that, the member for Armadale will no doubt be pleased that we will soon be undertaking an upgrade to the emergency department at Armadale hospital, and that is currently out for tender with construction anticipated before the end of the year.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** That's great for Darling Range, too.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** It certainly is great for Darling Range, member for Armadale!

Several members interjected.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** The member for Armadale is keen to hear that as part of the reconfiguration, a dedicated paediatric patient area and waiting room —

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Swan Hills, you are not in your regular seat!

**Mr R.H. COOK:** — and an enhanced short-stay unit for mental health patients, along with a dedicated respiratory assessment area will be developed, with works anticipated to be completed by mid-2021.

In addition to that, the member for Swan Hills, the member for Midland and other members in the East Metro Region will be pleased to hear that the St John of God Midland Public Hospital will soon benefit from a mental health emergency centre as part of a \$6 million upgrade to the emergency department in that hospital.

No doubt, the member for Geraldton—who has already jumped one political party and might join another soon—is excited to hear about the changes to the Geraldton hospital under the McGowan Labor government. It includes an expanded emergency department and a newly redeveloped high-dependency unit. These are great changes. But all these changes fall into insignificance compared with the massive expansion that is taking place at Joondalup Health Campus, which the member for Joondalup, member for Wanneroo and the current member for Girrawheen will be delighted to hear. This \$256 million redevelopment will see the emergency department expanded by another 12 bays and comes on top of the opening of the mental health observation area earlier this term. Finally, if that is not enough, and it is not, the member for Bunbury will be very pleased to hear that the emergency department at Bunbury Hospital at South West Health Campus will be upgraded with a fast-track area, including a new mental health observation area. These all go towards continuing to improve the services that Western Australian patients receive. We know that our emergency departments will continue to be under strong demand and that the great doctors, nurses and allied health staff who work in them will continue to be under pressure. But we know that in the McGowan government we have a government that puts hospitals and patients first, and makes sure that they get the investment they need.

#### AUDITOR GENERAL — SECTION 82 NOTIFICATIONS — METRONET

**894. Ms L. METTAM to the Premier:**

I refer to the Auditor General's "Annual Report 2019–2020", which states —

We continue to encounter some difficulty accessing documents subject to claims of public interest immunity, legal professional privilege or Cabinet confidentiality

Why is the government being so secretive, especially around Metronet, including the Metronet Taskforce?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

I saw the news item on Channel Seven on the weekend —

**Ms L. Mettam:** Last night.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Sorry?

**Ms L. Mettam:** Last night.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** No. I saw it on Sunday, post the Liberal Party state conference. Does the member remember the Liberal Party state conference that six members attended? The Liberal Party had a state conference on Sunday that six members of the Liberal Party attended, and they were attacking Metronet. That is odd, because it is such a fantastic project. Seven major projects are underway. In fact, eight major projects are underway now across the metro area and we are upgrading the rail line to Bunbury as we speak. All that activity is happening with thousands upon thousands of jobs. Yesterday, I was standing there with the Minister for Transport and Steve Irons, the member for Swan. Steve and I, jointly, were saying how great Metronet is. Steve Irons is 100 per cent on board. I must say that when the Minister for Transport had a go at the state Liberal Party during the press conference, Steve was standing there and looking a bit embarrassed by the opposition's performance on these issues.

We are 100 per cent behind the best capital works and transport project this state has ever seen. We are building it. To undertake eight major projects at once has never been done before in any state in Australia. It has never been done before. The projects are all over the metro area and on the way to Bunbury. It has never been done before, but this government is doing it. All we get from the Liberal Party is attack. All it wants to do is undermine it. When

the Liberal Party was in office, of course, it promised twice to build a rail line to Ellenbrook but it did nothing about it. The north eastern suburbs know that the Liberal Party did nothing, despite promising them that it would do it. Then into the northern suburbs, through Balcatta, Mirrabooka, Mt Lawley and Perth, the Liberals promised Metro Area Express light rail. People actually went out and bought land on the basis of that. Investors bought land in Mirrabooka on the basis that they would be able to invest around the MAX light rail train stations. The Liberal Party misled people on it.

The Auditor General's report found that in an overwhelming majority of cases it was entirely reasonable, for commercial-in-confidence reasons, for information not to be released. That is standard practice across all governments. That is what she found. The Liberal Party has a tactic. Liberal members ask ridiculous questions on notice—the questions are incomprehensible or obviously about commercial-in-confidence information—and then a section 82 response is issued. They then say that we are hiding information. They get a cheap media hit out of using that strategy. That is a misuse of Parliament that they are engaging in. I repeat: the Auditor General found that it was entirely reasonable for information to be withheld in the interests of commercial-in-confidence in the vast majority of cases she looked at.

AUDITOR GENERAL — SECTION 82 NOTIFICATIONS — METRONET

**895. Ms L. METTAM to the Premier:**

I have a supplementary question. If the government is so open and accountable, why has the Auditor General made a finding that the Minister for Transport's refusal to provide Parliament with minutes of the Metronet Taskforce was unreasonable and inappropriate, and will the Premier now direct his minister to release all task force minutes?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

The project definition plan for the project that I was visiting yesterday, the Forrestfield–Airport Link, was created when the Liberal Party was in office. We have asked for that to be released, but the opposition will not release it. The Liberal Party is not even in government and it will not release the project information.

**Ms L. Mettam:** Eighteen months late.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The Liberal Party was in government three and half years ago and it will not release that information. We have asked and asked, and the Leader of the Opposition refuses to release the project definition plan on the Forrestfield–Airport Link. Why will she not release it?

**Mrs L.M. Harvey:** We're not in government.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The Leader of the Opposition is not in government but she can authorise its release.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I am answering her question. I am answering her question with a question.

Several members interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I can and I am!

**Ms L. Mettam** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Vasse! Member for Vasse!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I am answering her question with a question. I have already answered her original question. I am now answering a new question with a question.

**The SPEAKER:** Through the Chair, Premier.

**Mr W.R. Marmion** interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The member cannot stop me. He can say what he wants to say but no-one is listening.

**Ms L. Mettam** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Vasse, do you want a supplementary? Do not keep interjecting or you will not get a supplementary.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** You will not get another one.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I have a copy of a letter here about the Forrestfield–Airport Link project definition plan. The Minister for Transport wrote to the Leader of the Opposition requesting it. The Leader of the Opposition wrote back that she refused to release it. I can table that if members would like. The letter states —

... the Opposition does not agree to the release of the Cabinet documents —

As she terms it —

you requested.

I understand that other governments have released that information before, but the Leader of the Opposition will not release it. Why is that? Why will the Leader of the Opposition not release it?

The real issue here is this: the Auditor General has indicated as part of her reporting that the government's answers on commercial-in-confidence were entirely appropriate in the vast majority of cases when commercial-in-confidence matters are being dealt with. The other real issue, which is the big issue, is that we are building Metronet and the Liberal Party wants to undermine it the whole way along. I saw images of the Liberal Party state conference on Sunday with the six members there campaigning against Metronet. We have eight projects underway.

An opposition member interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Really? I saw a bunch of people in the room, but there were only six members of Parliament there. Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I am advised that MPs were not even told it was on! It is a very leaky ship over there, I must say.

#### METHAMPHETAMINE — WASTEWATER TESTING

##### **896. MR S.J. PRICE to the Minister for Police:**

Before I ask my question, on behalf of the member for Kalamunda I would like to acknowledge the students and staff from Walliston Primary School and thank them for visiting Parliament today.

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's efforts in keeping Western Australia safe and strong by tackling the scourge of methamphetamine in our community. Can the minister update the house on what the latest wastewater drug testing results show about the measures being undertaken by this government to tackle the supply of methamphetamine in WA?

##### **Mrs M.H. ROBERTS replied:**

I thank the member for Forrestfield for his excellent question and for his very strong support of the Western Australia Police Force tackling the scourge of methamphetamine in our community. It is not surprising that the opposition has not asked me a question about those meth results. It has had ample opportunity to do so.

The fact of the matter is that on 29 October the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission released its national wastewater results. As people may know, the ACIC takes results from seven sites in Western Australia, three metropolitan and four regional. I can say to the house that based on those wastewater results, the consumption of methamphetamine in our community is the lowest on record. The reduction in meth consumption equates to over 290 000 fewer doses per day since the peak in 2016. That is around 93 000 fewer doses per day than there were in December 2019. This is a significant reduction from that high at the end of 2016, when the Leader of the Opposition happened to be Minister for Police, to now. It is a hugely significant reduction. It is 60 per cent lower than it was at the peak in 2016. It is now well below the national average. Perth's result is the third lowest of the state capitals, behind those of Hobart and Brisbane—a very different ranking from what it was in 2016. Our rate is the second lowest of all the states, just behind that of Tasmania. Regional WA was one of only two regional state areas in which the rate of consumption of meth use fell. Of course, our government has taken a very strong line on methamphetamine; we did that from day one. We introduced additional penalties such as life imprisonment for meth dealers. We committed to 120 extra personnel for our police. We have invested in an amazing number of resources for our police to help them tackle the scourge. People will be aware that our police have had significant results in dealing with organised crime in the community and taking methamphetamine out of the community.

I never thought I would get to see what \$9 million in cash looked like, but I saw that yesterday; it filled two trestle tables at police headquarters. That amount of cash was seized, along with at least four kilograms of methamphetamine. There were two trucks, one in Meckering and one in Coolgardie—a couple of vehicles. Police are still counting the cash, so \$9 million is not the end of it. I am told that previously the record amount of cash seized by any police force in Australia was in New South Wales, and it was \$8.5 million in cash. This seizure already exceeds \$9 million. It is an absolutely fantastic result by our organised crime division. It shows that when we put in the resources and the effort, we can get really significant results. We know that this cash was destined for New South Wales. Two men in one of the trucks were arrested; one man was from New South Wales and one was from Queensland. That cash was heading east, presumably to continue to fund the meth trade. The Western Australia Police Force here has disrupted a major organised crime syndicate. These are the kinds of results that make a huge difference to the amount of methamphetamine entering our community. Disrupting the supply chain is one part of it. Our government has had a comprehensive meth action plan from day one, but this is the best result on record. Police will not give up here. Our government will not give up here. We will continue to target those people who peddle in this vile trade.

I thank the member for Forrestfield for asking this question on such an important issue because he knows, as I do, that methamphetamine destroys families and drives crime in our community. People under its influence do things that they would not normally do and that impacts very badly on their families. That is why it has been a priority for us. I congratulate the organised crime squad and the whole Western Australia Police Force for this fantastic result.

“LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELD: MANAGING THE IMPACT OF THE RAPID INCREASE OF SHORT-TERM RENTALS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA” — GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

**897. Mr D.T. REDMAN to the Minister for Planning:**

Can the minister update the house on the progress of the government’s response to the 2019 parliamentary inquiry report called “Levelling the Playing Field: Managing the Impact of the Rapid Increase of Short-Term Rentals in Western Australia” tabled in February this year, in particular the central register for short-stay accommodation providers.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI replied:**

I thank the member for that question. Yes, an across-government working group has been considering a policy for the future of particularly Airbnb, but also short-stay accommodation across Western Australia. As the member will be aware, a number of different views are out there, and it involves cross-government consideration with me, the Minister for Local Government and the Minister for Commerce about what system of accreditation regulation will be in place, the compliance activity and how it will interact with local planning schemes and local government about what is and what is not permissible. That work is continuing. It is before government, and I suspect it will be in front of government soon for further decision-making. We want to make sure that we take on board comments and considerations from key stakeholders. We also want to continually monitor what is happening in New South Wales, and particularly in Tasmania, with some of its modifications. It is one of those areas in which everyone will have a different view on the level of regulation and information. However, we all understand that some changes are needed to make sure there is a more level playing field in this area.

“LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELD: MANAGING THE IMPACT OF THE RAPID INCREASE OF SHORT-TERM RENTALS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA” — GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

**898. Mr D.T. REDMAN to the Minister for Planning:**

I have a supplementary question. Given the government’s support for the recommendations, what does the minister say to accommodation providers going into yet another Christmas period without a level playing field in the short-stay accommodation market?

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI replied:**

I am not sure whether the member for Warren–Blackwood has tried to book Christmas holiday accommodation anywhere in Western Australia. I understand it is an issue, but I think we can all safely say that regional accommodation providers are very busy at the moment, and will be very, very busy over the next three to four months. I suspect they will be busy for a long time. I agree with the theory that many people have changed their outlook on travel in the world. I think our regional accommodation providers will be very busy from now on. As I said, I am not sure whether members have tried to book a few days away over Christmas, but it is not possible. I know there are some real issues, including a number of issues around how Airbnb impacts providers not only with accommodation, but also where regional workers can live, and that is a continuing issue. We take this very, very seriously. I hope the member does not play politics with this issue because like taxi reform and other reforms, these reforms are difficult.

What is the member for Warren–Blackwood doing about what is happening in the Nationals WA at the moment? He can come in here and ask me questions —

*Point of Order*

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** Mr Speaker —

**The SPEAKER:** She has not said anything yet.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members! I want to hear the point of order.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** I draw your attention, Mr Speaker, to the relevancy of the question asked by the member for Warren–Blackwood.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** I have a point of order. I cannot hear the point of order.

A member interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Swan Hills, I call you to order for the first time. You are not even in your own seat and you are shouting, which I could give you two for, but I will give you only one. Nothing has been said yet so there is not a point of order. Member for Nedlands, yours is a frivolous point of order, so I call you to order for the first time.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** The member for Nedlands cannot hear what the member for Dawesville is saying because he is always asleep and I find that when someone is asleep in question time, they cannot hear much. But it is good that something woke him up. Maybe my beautiful voice woke him up!

Member for Warren–Blackwood, I take the issue of short-stay accommodation seriously, but the real question for the National Party today is what are you doing about the level of bullying and intimidation and divisiveness in your party?

## CORONAVIRUS — CULTURE AND THE ARTS SECTOR — RECOVERY

**899. Mr D.T. PUNCH to the Minister for Culture and the Arts:**

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to supporting businesses and workers in WA's arts sector as the economy recovers from the impacts of COVID-19.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how the government is providing producers and event organisers with the certainty they need to start touring and putting on performances again across the state?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how this support will help drive more economic activity in Western Australia?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:**

I thank the member for Bunbury for his question, which I am very pleased to answer.

- (1)–(2) As members will be very aware, Western Australia is now one of the safest places on the earth. It is safe because of the leadership of the Premier and the government of Western Australia and the tremendous contribution and commitment by the people of Western Australia to ensure that we keep all our families safe. Of course, that is why we are now at over 100 days of zero community spread. Our economy is now the envy of other states and territories, and indeed the envy of other nations. Of course, we recognise that the cautious approach that has been taken—always focusing on the health and safety of our citizens—has worked and it has worked so well.

Of course, we know that when COVID-19 hit, those in the entertainment industry—in events and in performance et cetera—were impacted very severely. But they are back on the road now because this government has made sure that, through its \$76 million commitment through the recovery package, it has a whole range of programs and initiatives that are aimed at ensuring that we can get our performers back on stage and get our musicians back into performance venues. We can get our festival organisers and people who are able to present high-quality community events back out there delivering high-quality opportunities to communities throughout Western Australia—and we are doing it because we have been listening very closely to the sector. I am very pleased that part of our commitment includes the getting the show back on the road program, which is aimed to assist performance venues through an underwriting process. This new shared risk program allows a benchmark to be reached whereby there is support and underwriting support to share risk. This means that producers, touring companies, our wonderful performing arts entities such as the Western Australian Ballet, Western Australian Opera, West Australian Symphony Orchestra and our community theatres, and all those organisers and entrepreneurs, can have some surety that the getting the show back on the road program can support them at the box office. In the regions, for example, member for Bunbury, we will now be able to see touring programs restart. We will see touring opportunities—private, state-based and state-funded—being able to get back out into the regions. We know that is very important for our regional performing arts venues because many of them had to close and stay closed during the COVID-19 crisis, but now there is a surety that they can commence activity.

The getting the show back on the road program has been applauded by other states and territories. When it was announced as part of our recovery package, a number of other states and territories noted this initiative by the McGowan government. It demonstrates this government's commitment to the creative industries of Western Australia; to our artists, artisans, dancers and performers; and to those people who are involved in putting together entertainment opportunities, festivals and events. All those people are important to our economy, but they are also very important people in our social dividend that deliver high-quality experiences in Western Australia. We live in the safest place in the world. We recognise that and we are cautiously making sure that we move forward, but we also recognise that people in the creative industries are an essential part of our economy and our social fabric and we are supporting them on the ground with such initiatives. I am very pleased and very proud of our initiatives, and I am very pleased that the sector has been listened to very carefully and closely. The people in that sector are always engaged. I salute them because they are a very important part of our recovery from COVID-19.

## PUBLIC HOUSING — VETERANS — HOMELESSNESS

**900. Mr A. KRSTICEVIC to the Minister for Housing:**

Given that it is Remembrance Day, can the minister confirm how many additional houses will be dedicated to veterans in the government's new housing strategy out to 2030, given the high proportion of veteran homelessness?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY replied:**

I thank the member for that question. It has a lot of assumptions behind it. The first assumption is that there is a widespread and high proportion of veterans represented in the homeless community in Western Australia. It is quite a bizarre claim. I really look forward to the member providing me with some evidence; I am happy to receive it by email or phone or even behind the Speaker's chair. I spent nearly the last three and a half years researching this very topic, as the member might imagine, as a veteran and as the Minister for Veterans Issues. Unfortunately, so much of what we see of veteran homelessness is informed by social media representing the United States experience.

I point out to members that over one-third of the United States Armed Forces is made up of the lowest socioeconomic group within that population. That in itself creates challenges. I defy members to make an extrapolation for what they do in a massive defence force in the United States to what we do here with a very highly professionalised defence force. There is no doubt that there are some challenges for people who have served, and those challenges are multilayered, but there is not, as the member alluded to, a plethora of people living under bridges or in parks sleeping rough. I find it quite egregious that the member would pick out that particular cohort on this very day when thousands of people are doing it tough in Western Australia. They are challenged, but they are well supported by the McGowan government through the Minister for Community Services, who has done her level best to deliver what we can to those people who are most vulnerable in our community. I think it is actually quite offensive that the member gets to his feet and asks a question on veteran homelessness on this very day when we should be honouring their service.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members, just because I okayed it today, I do not want everyone to keep using that word all the time.

PUBLIC HOUSING — VETERANS — HOMELESSNESS

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC to the Minister for Housing:**

I have a supplementary question. Since being elected in March 2017, can the minister confirm that his new housing strategy up to 2030 will effectively mean that his government has committed to only less than 1 600 additional public houses over the next decade?

**The SPEAKER:** No supplementary. That is the end of question time.

MEMBER FOR ROE — MATTER OF PRIVILEGE — CODE OF CONDUCT

*Point of Order*

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I rise on a point of order. I refer to standing order 109, “Matter of privilege”, and also reference the Code of Conduct for Members of the Legislative Assembly—the blue pages.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members! I want to hear this.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** During question time, there was a question on the issues around members declaring a financial or other interest. Mr Speaker, I do not necessarily expect you to determine this at this point, but I raise it in relation to standing order 109, “Matter of privilege”, and the Code of Conduct for Members of the Legislative Assembly, and the issues that came out during a question from the member for Roe to the Minister for Water. I seek your consideration as to whether there has been a failure to disclose a conflict of interest.

**The SPEAKER:** As a matter of privilege has been raised, I will need to consider the matter and come back to the house at a later stage of today’s sitting.

SENATE VACANCY

*Statement by Speaker*

**THE SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson)** [3.09 pm]: Members, I have to report a communication from His Excellency the Governor in the following terms —

The Governor transmits to the Legislative Assembly a copy of a despatch which he has received today from the Honourable the President of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Australia, notifying that a vacancy has happened in the representation of the State of Western Australia in the said Senate.

Government House  
Perth, 10 November 2020

The despatch from the President of the Senate reads as follows —

7 November 2020

The Honourable Kim Beazley, AC  
Governor of Western Australia

Your Excellency

Pursuant to the provisions of section 21 of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution, I notify Your Excellency there is a vacancy in the representation of the State of Western Australia caused by the resignation of Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann today, Friday 6 November 2020.

Yours sincerely

Scott Ryan.

**JOINT SITTING***Motion*

On motion by **Mr M. McGowan (Premier)**, resolved —

That Mr Speaker be requested to confer with the President of the Legislative Council, in order to fix a day and place whereon and whereat the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council, sitting and voting together, shall choose a person to hold the place of the Senator whose place has become vacant.

**BILLS***Assent*

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the following bills —

1. Work Health and Safety Bill 2019.
2. Safety Levies Amendment Bill 2019.
3. Road Traffic Amendment (Immobilisation, Towing and Detention of Vehicles) Bill 2020.

**CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2020***Second Reading*

Resumed from 24 September.

**MR C.J. TALLENTIRE** (Thornlie — Parliamentary Secretary) [3.11 pm]: I will begin by outlining the essence of the Conservation and Land Management Amendment Bill 2020, which is to enable the joint vesting of areas of the conservation estate. Members will be more familiar with the notion of joint management. Over the past 10 years, areas of the conservation estate have been jointly managed by conservation agencies and traditional owners with an interest. Now we are lifting things to another level with joint vesting; in other words, the actual ownership of the land. This is reflective of the history of the lands. In this NAIDOC week with the theme “Always Was, Always Will Be”, it is especially relevant that this legislation is before the house. It is a recognition of the connection that our First Nations people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, have to the lands of this state.

This legislation is specific to the marine environment. Considerable work has been done to establish the joint vesting arrangements in the terrestrial conservation estate, but now we move to ensure there is clarity about the joint vesting arrangements in the marine environment. First Nations people, who are saltwater people, are especially interested in this. It gives them the opportunity to be great supporters of conservation lands. I will address a little later how important it is that we continue to establish our conservation estate. The point is that it means that the traditional owners, the First Nations people, will have management responsibility, but also vesting responsibility with those areas. That is very important. There is a great need for the knowledge of the traditional owners to be brought to bear in the management of the conservation estate. That is of great value, but it is important to recognise also the ownership of the land.

Currently, a body looks after the conservation estate from the broader community’s perspective; namely, the Conservation and Parks Commission, which has been in existence for eight or so years. Previously there was a split between the vesting body for the terrestrial environment, the national parks and reserves authority, and the marine parks and reserves authority for the marine environment. Under the Barnett government those two bodies were merged into the Conservation and Parks Commission. The aim of this legislation is to ensure that the Conservation and Parks Commission and an Aboriginal body corporate are jointly the vesting bodies for an area of the conservation estate. The Labor Party committed at the 2017 election to ensure that Aboriginal people be involved in the management of conservation reserves and to enhance the vesting status as well. It is very important to do that.

It is important also to go into the significance of the conservation estate. The McGowan government has made a strong commitment to increase the area by some five million hectares, which will represent a 20 per cent increase in the area of the conservation estate. Why is this significant? We all lament when we hear about biodiversity loss, species decline and animals and plants being listed on threatened species lists. Resuscitation, or emergency care, can be undertaken to protect the viability of a threatened species. However, it is best to make sure that everything has a significant habitat to preserve itself, to reproduce itself in its natural functioning environment. Many exhibits in the Perth Zoo, unfortunately, come from all parts of the world, not just Australia. We can see the conservation status of species from across the world and that, sadly, they are endangered. We can see what was the original habitat range and what the current habitat range is. That leads me to this point: invariably, the reason for the loss of a species, its demise and eventual extinction, is habitat loss. That is why the conservation estate is so important. It is a means of preserving habitat for the suite of plants and animals that are the life support system on the planet that are also our natural heritage. It is incredibly important that we preserve our natural heritage. As occupants of this land, we have a responsibility to do that.

Bringing in the notion of traditional owners being involved in the management makes sense. The traditional owners, the custodians of this land, have had a long, enduring connection with the land, for 65 000 to 70 000 years in some areas. They have incredible knowledge about how it functions; whether it is the use of things such as fire regimes or

practices in hunting species at particular times of year—all kinds of land management. This is something that is almost intuitively understood by our First Nations people and it is important that we bring them into this management role and ensure that that status is fully respected and appreciated by elevating it to also being a vesting role.

Another dimension is the increasing area of conservation estate that we like to visit. Some parts, such as national parks, are very accessible. Wonderful interpretation information is available for those areas. New technology is available that enables people to interpret and appreciate areas.

I heard the Treasurer talking about the magnificence of the landscape in so many parts of the state as well. We can appreciate the country in all kinds of ways, whether at the level of species or right up to the landscape. This is reflected in the way the UNESCO World Heritage listing process works. At the very highest level, UNESCO talks about World Heritage places, and we are very fortunate to have a number of those in Western Australia. The UNESCO body also talks about the level of humans and the biosphere, with landscape, biodiversity and productive land use. That other level is listed as the level of humans and the biosphere. Then there is the geoparks level, which is more simply about an appreciation of the landform. The geoparks system has not taken off in Australia so much. I believe it is very popular with the Chinese. This is not relevant to us today in these COVID times, but when many Chinese people look at where they will travel around the world, they look at World Heritage sites but they also look to visit geopark areas, because they are just enthralled by the landscape features.

Those landscape features so often define an Aboriginal connection with country and land. That is a very interesting part of that as well. When we are travelling in the marine environment visiting coastal areas around Ningaloo, Shark Bay and the Kimberley coast, with the amazing landscape and landform coastal environments there, we can look at them at the simple level of stunning geology. We can be told about the geological history of an area, and that can be fascinating in itself. It can be very instructive in telling us about how climates have changed, how different landforms have come to be, what the evolutionary impacts might be on various species of fish and marine mammals in an area and where whale-calving sanctuaries might be. That is all very interesting, but when this other element of the Aboriginal connection is brought in, there is then another dimension and level of richness of the natural and Indigenous heritage of the state of Western Australia. That is another great reason for us to pursue this joint vesting that establishes who traditional owners are. It gives them that recognition and it brings that story to the fore.

I am going away from the marine environment to the terrestrial just for a moment, but I recently had the opportunity of visiting some lands inland from Esperance with Doc Reynolds, who is an Aboriginal man passionate about Indigenous heritage. He was talking about songlines and demonstrating how various rock formations in the area signified boundaries of one tribal group's area and its intersection with another. We can see how there is a trading of stories and how two different groups would come to meet. There was an exchange of ideas and, indeed, very interestingly, an exchange of what we might call assets or goods. This is very important. It is further evidence that the whole idea of terra nullius was completely bogus, because there is the reality that the land was looked after and managed. Our First Nation people were trading and interacting with one another in a commercial way, in a sense, and in a very important cultural way.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** It was a legal fiction.

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** Terra nullius was absolutely a legal fiction; the member for Armadale is absolutely correct.

Visiting these areas with Doc Reynolds and appreciating our Aboriginal connection made the experience so much richer. It is all very well to see interesting eucalyptus species and other plants such as eremophilas and grevilleas, you name it, and the animals that depend on that habitat, but to appreciate how those ecosystems exist in relation to our First Nation people adds to the whole joy and appreciation of the culture. It has a very practical value as well in that it can help us to manage those lands.

Turning back to marine park reservations, for a long time it was thought the process would be very complex and it would be very difficult to find a means to have a joint vesting of the marine environment. Indeed, it has often been a struggle to have not just a marine park, but what has often been termed a sanctuary or no-take zone within the marine park. There has almost been a traditional kneejerk reaction from some commercial and recreational fishers who do not like the idea of the sanctuary zones. I think there is now a very strong appreciation in the commercial and recreational fishing sectors and the broader population about the benefits of having these areas where various demersal and pelagic fish species can reproduce, just to use the example of fish. I remember the term “big fat mothers” was used to describe the most reproductive fish. They populate sanctuary zones and their offspring go forth to the areas where commercial or recreational fishing is allowed. There is this central rejuvenation point that has benefits that extend far out. That knowledge has come about now, and I think it is far more appreciated by the whole of the Western Australian community that these no-take areas are of benefit to all. They help repopulate the whole. That is an incredibly important aspect. We have a very nice coming together of good scientific knowledge, with very much the science of the twenty-first century, enhanced by and working with the knowledge of First Nation people—bringing it together so there is a true appreciation and enduring benefits.

One thing we found with the various sanctuary zones and the management of marine parks is that it can be very costly. Preserving small areas and having boundaries in place with explanations of how different zones in a marine

park operate to convey to the public to ensure there is proper respect of those zonings can be an expensive exercise. There is great virtue in increasing the size of the conservation estate and making sure we have good interconnections between different zones. That is all good ecosystem management and it is good bio-regional planning. There might be a whale species that moves from one area to another that needs to be accommodated so it has the different habitats it needs.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** The extension of the whole conservation estate is very important. That way we get the best results. To do that hand in hand with First Nation people, the traditional owners, is so important. That way we get the very best benefits.

Having been a member of this place since 2008, I go along to schools in my electorate and make a point of talking to students about their aspirations when they leave school. When I started out, it was very common for young Aboriginal boys to aspire to play AFL. In the next couple of weeks, I will be at Yule Brook College talking to the students in the Clontarf program. That program has lots of brilliant footy players, but I know that when I ask them what they think that they will be doing in a few years' time, they are just as likely to say that they want to be an AFL player or a ranger. They want to be involved in the ranger programs and that is tremendous. That is again where vesting helps us. It helps us to establish the foundations of very valuable careers on land that individuals not only have a connection with, but feel eternally connected to because they are, in fact, their traditional lands. That vested relationship makes it front and centre of their minds, which is very pleasing indeed.

Earlier, I mentioned the Ningaloo Marine Park. I note that on 4 August, following the historic signing of an Indigenous land use agreement for the proposed Ningaloo coastal reserves, the McGowan government announced that Ningaloo Coast will be jointly managed by the traditional owners, the Nganhurra Thanardi Garbu Aboriginal Corporation, and the state government. That sort of development means so much to bringing forward all these benefits. It also means that we benefit from an increase in the size of the Ningaloo Marine Park. The agreement provides for the joint management and joint vesting of the existing Ningaloo Marine Park, which is pretty sizeable at 26 000 hectares. I understand that currently about one-third of that is a no-take or sanctuary zone. I think that that is set to increase, but I do not have the figures with me. The Ningaloo Marine Park and the Cape Range National Park, which is 50 000 hectares, and another 78 000 hectares of new conservation area that extends over approximately 215 kilometres of that magnificent Ningaloo Coast will be jointly managed.

These are really positive developments. There is broad community support for the expansion of the conservation estate in the sensitive Ningaloo area, where potentially visitation from tourists puts great pressure on the marine and terrestrial natural environment. We are all very aware of how many Western Australian tourists are travelling around the state at the moment. That is a tremendous thing, but when people visit those places—members have discussed this already today—pressure is put on accommodation and that puts pressure on the natural environment. At various times I have stayed in places like Coral Bay where an increased volume in patronage puts great pressure on things like water and wastewater treatment plants. If they do not get it right, effluent could leak into the marine environment. That will have really damaging consequences on the marine environment, not to mention unsightly and unpleasant consequences as well. It would be very embarrassing for us as Western Australians if we were to pollute such magnificent areas. We have to manage these areas in a benign way by leaving only footprints on the natural environment.

The Ningaloo case is interesting. The Ningaloo Indigenous land use agreement is the first ILUA that has been delivered under the McGowan government's Plan for Our Parks initiative, which aims to increase the conservation estate in WA by, as I said earlier, five million hectares over five years through new jointly managed parks and reserves. The Indigenous land use agreements will be used to establish things and then enable joint vesting to take place. That is indeed very important. We will be able to use some of those same principles in the Kimberley. The Kimberley is very precious. It is quite difficult to travel around because it is a fair distance from anywhere. Often it is expensive for people to do a coastal trip around the Kimberley, but it is magnificent nevertheless. I have only begun my Kimberley adventures and I look forward to seeing more of the Kimberley coastal environment in the future. But the area certainly resonates with the whole of the Western Australian community. We only have to think of the success of Tim Winton's *Dirt Music* and the story it tells about how magnificent it is to sleep outside on the north Kimberley coast. The area really touches the heart of all of us, so we can only begin to imagine how precious that area is to the Aboriginal people from that region and how deeply felt their connection is with the area. I recall one part of *Dirt Music* that describes how the reef sharks come in to watch the camper as he is sleeping overnight and how there is almost a bond between these wild animals and the camper. It is really stunning. *Dirt Music* is a wonderful piece of literature and the Kimberley is a wonderful piece of our Western Australian heritage.

I also want to touch on the mechanics of ecosystem-based management, recognising that it is a part of the whole vesting and joint management process. It is really necessary to manage things like fisheries, chemical and noise pollution, and vessel traffic. Earlier I touched on how tourism is increasing and how that is having a largely positive effect, but it must be correctly managed. Some people have said that we need to think carefully about the carrying capacity of sensitive areas such as the Shark Bay world heritage area or the Ningaloo world heritage area. We need

to think about how many people should be on the coast at any one time and make sure an adequate number of beds is made available. But we actually need to limit the number of beds. I use “beds” in a very general sense; I am talking about beds in hotels and beds in various campsites, including wild camping sites. We need to regulate the number of people who are in the area at the one time so it can cope with the volume of human traffic. If too much pressure is put on the environment, there will be consequences. This has happened on some parts of the Ningaloo Coast, particularly on the stations where grey nomads and others use the tracks extensively and carve out tracks on the coastal dune system, which leads to erosion and other problems. We have to be able to manage the number of visitors to these places to ensure that this natural part of our natural and Indigenous heritage is there for future generations.

I also want to touch on an issue around ecosystem-based management—that is, how taking a single-species approach to managing an area can get us into trouble. If we just worry about the numbers of a single fish species, we may not protect the whole ecosystem. We could miss the broader implications and there could be a species decline if we look at only an individual species. There are many pressures on our coast environment. I think that a joint vesting arrangement will help us to navigate those challenges in a much more thorough and connected way. In preparing this speech, I thought about the mass stranding of long-finned pilot whales. We still do not understand why that happens. There is a general theory that it occurs because the whales are chasing food, and their navigation system and ability to send out clicks and monitor where they are in the marine environment somehow fails them. We have to wonder, though, whether the problem around acoustic pollution has some role to play. I know that the oil and gas industries are very aware of the impact of their seismic surveys, and likewise is the Navy. The Australian Navy, and also the United States Navy, are very aware of the consequences of the use of sonar and other acoustic tracking and navigational systems and that that is potentially the cause of some of the terrible whale strandings that we see.

The point of this legislation is all about helping us look after our marine environment through this wonderful thing of joint vesting. We can be very proud as Western Australians that we see our First Nation people as absolutely joint partners in how we look after our natural and Indigenous heritage. It is very appropriate for NAIDOC Week that we are bringing this legislation forward. I think this will further inspire more young people from Aboriginal or Islander heritage to be involved in conservation and in the management and interpretation of our conservation estate, explaining it to people and helping people who are perhaps city-dwelling and from a European or North American background appreciate the uniqueness of the Western Australian heritage.

**MS L. METTAM (Vasse)** [3.41 pm]: I rise in support of the Conservation and Land Management Amendment Bill 2020. The key elements of this bill include the joint vesting of marine reserves with the Conservation and Parks Commission and an Aboriginal body corporate. The bill broadens the conservation purpose of marine parks for the protection of Aboriginal culture and heritage, and clarifies the application of the Conservation and Land Management Act and regulations for the management of unallocated crown land.

I state from the outset that the Liberal opposition will be supporting this bill. As the shadow Minister for Fisheries, I will make some comments about the feedback that I have received from the fishing industry specifically. Some concerns have been raised from an industry perspective, and I will get onto that.

I also make the comment that it is quite timely that we are bringing this matter on for debate during NAIDOC Week. I acknowledge the theme of this year’s NAIDOC Week as “Always Was, Always Will Be”, which recognises that the First Nation people have occupied and cared for this land for over 65 000 years. With that, I make the point that we certainly support, and there is broad support for this among industry, the notion of extending the joint vesting to marine reserves. It is fair to say that this bill is in part an acknowledgment of the traditional owners’ connection to land, sea and country. Since 1993, there has been a greater degree of acknowledgment and engagement in law of this rightful connection to land, sea and country. That has been through the native title legislation and through other pieces of legislation. The extension of joint vesting to marine and terrestrial reserves highlights the obvious and deep connection of First Nation people to land, sea and country.

In fact, the former Liberal–National government oversaw the increase in the state’s marine parks and reserves from 1.5 million hectares in 2008 to more than five million hectares, representing a 233 per cent increase in these reserves. The Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy recognises the largest interconnected system of marine and national parks in this state, which will be jointly managed by traditional owners. In relation to the joint vesting, this bill is in some respects an extension of the provisions made under the previous government to respect the Aboriginal cultural rights to land, sea and country. The Conservation and Land Management Bill 2015 amended the Conservation and Land Management Act 1984 to deliver our election commitment on the joint vesting of lands for Aboriginal people. This bill enabled the joint vesting of terrestrial conservation reserves with the Conservation and Parks Commission and an Aboriginal body corporate. This joint vesting currently exists in national parks, nature reserves and conservation reserves. The bill was introduced by the former Minister for Environment and, as I have said, had support from both sides of this house.

I turn now to some questions that industry is seeking to have answered. To start with, I would like the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Environment to clarify the material impact of this joint vesting on the management and use of land for Indigenous culture and for other Australians, as well as in relation to the terrestrial conservation estate. I had the benefit of speaking about this bill to a former Minister for Environment, now the

Mayor of the City of Joondalup. He was quite positive about the meaningful difference that it had made to the management of terrestrial lands. The purpose of this was to acknowledge the connection of our First Australians with land, sea and country, a history that extends over 650 000 years before European contact. Although there are some questions about this provision, this is in many respects an extension of a process that started under our government, as I have stated. However, there are questions about what this will do to the current zoning and permitted activities in these areas.

The major concern and need for clarification that I have heard from industry is about the amendment to section 13B of the CALM act to broaden the conservation purpose of marine parks by including the culture and heritage of Aboriginal persons as the fourth purpose. The current conservation purposes are the proper conservation of the natural environment, the protection of flora and fauna, and the preservation of any feature of archaeological, historic or scientific interest. This bill will add a new purpose of the culture and heritage of Aboriginal persons. I am asking, and the industry is asking: Will this be a reason to create other conservation estates going forward? Will this shape and trigger additional conservation estates in the form of marine parks as well? There has been some feedback that this may be a shift away from what has been understood as the purpose for marine parks, which is the conservation of the natural environment. These are fair questions to ask about how this will change the management of marine parks and the obligations of that management, given that they have so far been clearly defined around the proper conservation of the natural environment as well as features of archaeological, historic or scientific interest.

Expanding on the reason a marine park can be preserved is different from accounting for the traditional owners at the table as major stakeholders in the park, and I would just like some clarification around that. As I have stated, I have spoken to industry bodies and individuals in the industry and there is support for the inclusion of traditional owners and ensuring that they have a seat at the table. Their involvement in the process is necessary. However, the proposed addition to the conservation purposes has raised some questions and industry is seeking clarification. It will presumably shape the management of the protection and usage of these parks, and it has raised some concern among stakeholders in the industry who have respected the science undertaken to define these marine parks in WA. Those who have enjoyed and have a justified right to access these areas, understandably, have raised some concern about how this will work. There is a call for a definition in this bill of “culture and heritage of Aboriginal persons”. For most of us, I think it is obvious, but the fact that the definition is absent from the bill raises some concerns about how that will shape the management of these parks going forward.

I refer to consultation. I will read a section of a letter received from the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council in a moment, but these industry bodies play an important role in the fishing industry in this state. WAFIC represents the commercial sector, 85 per cent of which is in remote coastal communities, representing a significant part of regional WA. The commercial fishing sector provides \$400 million to the state’s economy and supports many of our regional family businesses.

Additionally, Recfishwest states that recreational fishing represents \$2.4 billion in economic return to families and Western Australians; it puts a strong value on recreational fishing and also has an impact on the livelihoods of Western Australians. The industry, through a range of measures such as bag and size limits and respect for marine parks, supports the sustainable fisheries here in Western Australia. We have 20 marine parks in the state, which will soon include two additional marine parks with South Coast Marine Park and Buccaneer coming on board as well as an expanded Marmion Marine Park. The inclusion of Marmion Marine Park will mean a 23 per cent increase in our marine estates.

We are seeing more fisheries certified than anyone else is seeing internationally and we have some of the best and most sustainable benchmarks in the world. There is a lot of respect for the work that has been undertaken by previous governments and a lot of support for sustainable fisheries going forward. The inclusion of an Aboriginal body and the joint vesting of these marine parks is certainly welcome, but there is some need for clarification of the amendment proposed to section 13B(1) of the act.

There is also some concern about how the marine parks will be managed given what has been described by industry as an inherent anti-fishing philosophy within the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. It is hoped that this is balanced with the fisheries division of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. I have also received feedback that industry would like a ranger who is a fisheries scientist and can have a greater involvement in the management of marine parks going forward.

The Aboriginal body corporate will have equal advice and review of management plans and the industry is very keen to understand how that would work. The industry seeks examples of what recreational or commercial activities could be impacted on by this bill. This is a new and potential impact on its activity, so it would like to understand what that may well look like. Furthermore, industry has an appetite to understand whether, if there are impacts on current operations, there will be an opportunity for compensation and how that would relate to the Fishing and Related Industries Compensation (Marine Reserves) Act 1997.

As I have stated, the first feedback that I received from the industry was that it was not aware of what this legislation was about and what it involved, and that was not recently; that was when the bill first came to this place. No doubt,

there has been—I hope—some further consultation since. But this legislation took many industry bodies by surprise and I understand, and I am hopeful, that there has been quite a bit of work undertaken since to understand what it actually means.

I will read an excerpt, if I may, of a letter that I received from the then CEO of WAFIC about this legislation. It states —

We note the Premier’s commitment to ‘rights of traditional owners’. These rights are generally seen as conceptually different to ‘culture and heritage’. The fishing industry supports the Premier’s commitment. The industry has participated in many native title claims, supported consent determinations wherever possible and sought that all legal rights to the marine domain should be recognised and respected (including protection of rights not yet subject to a determination).

Accordingly the following questions arise:

- How will native title rights be recognised and managed in Marine Parks, noting they are not the subject of the proposed amendment?
- How does section 13B(1) translate legally into a head of power to create Aboriginal Specific Purpose Zones (as we understand are being contemplated for the Kimberley)? What is intended by those zones?
- Given the broad words of Section 138(1), will all areas of a marine park (whether in an Aboriginal zone or otherwise) be subject to legal limitations on fishing and recreational activities unless they are consistent with the ‘protection and conservation of the value of the marine park to the culture and heritage of Aboriginal persons’?
- How will shifts in culture and heritage values or shifts in understanding and recognition of those values affect recreational and commercial fishing, given the wording of Section 13B(1) ...

These are fair questions. WAFIC is also concerned about the lack of response to that letter. I hope this letter has since been responded to, as it was sent back at the beginning of September when this bill was introduced and first came to the attention of the Legislative Assembly.

The Western Rock Lobster Council was also unaware of the bill when it was first presented and what it represents. I have had feedback from Recfishwest along those lines as well.

**Mr R.R. Whitby:** There was extensive stakeholder consultation. I think in the early stages some of those groups declined the offer of a briefing and then subsequent to that they had briefings. That’s how it played out.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I am just telling members the feedback I have had from industry. I hope that there has been a catch-up since the beginning of September when I raised these concerns and provided some feedback from industry. Certainly, it was seeking clarification on what these proposals will mean in terms of the material impact on livelihoods.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

#### MEMBER FOR ROE

##### *Matter of Privilege — Personal Explanation*

**MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe)** [4.00 pm]: I rise today to provide an explanation to the house. Earlier today, the Leader of the House sought a ruling from the Speaker and I rise to provide an explanation to the house on that.

Firstly, by way of background, I am a partner in Ucarro Grazing Co, which is our farming enterprise. My wife and I are partners in that. We own farmland in Katanning, between Katanning and Kojonup. Of course, that has been declared on my parliamentary declaration—the farming property and our farming enterprise. I just wanted to clear that up, firstly.

As members are well aware, I have spoken many times on the farm water rebate scheme and the need for some action on that. Certainly, in my electorate of Roe, I have 10 of the 12 water-deficient declared areas so it is certainly very much at the heart of what I do. I always speak on behalf of my constituents. As I said, I have raised this question with the Minister for Water many times, as was pointed out today, and in general discussions about water and water deficiency. I have certainly brought that up time and again. In those speeches, it was my intention to represent my constituents, many of whom are in a similar situation to me, and might have only two or three dams out of 25 or 30 on their farm that have water. I am certainly in that same situation, with many of my dams having just a small puddle at the bottom of them at the moment.

From my perspective, I am motivated to help my constituents. Certainly, there is no personal gain or any of that type of thing in my mind. I do note that under the Code of Conduct for Members of the Legislative Assembly, I form part of a broad class. As a farmer in Katanning, I form part of a broad class of farmers who are suffering from lack of stock water in their dams, and that is really who I speak on behalf of. If, however, I have created a perception of conflict of interest, I sincerely apologise to the house. I am always representing my constituents. I am always doing the best I can for the electors and constituents of Roe, and that is at the heart of what I do. Thank you.

**The SPEAKER:** Members, after hearing the personal explanation, I will go away and look at that matter. I will get advice from the Clerk and make a decision first thing tomorrow morning.

**McGOWAN GOVERNMENT — ROYALTIES FOR REGIONS***Motion*

**MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Nationals WA)** [4.04 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the McGowan government for its mismanagement of royalties for regions over the past four years, which has led to a fundamental loss of confidence in the program by regional communities.

The Nationals WA are raising this very serious matter as part of our private members' business this afternoon. For the past four years, Nationals WA members have been on the record raising our concerns about royalties for regions and how this government has used, or misused, this important regional development fund. It is a great concern to us that, as a result of the McGowan Labor government's latest budget, we are seeing further cuts and further misuse of a program that used to create opportunity and drive aspirational thought to grow our regions and allow communities to move beyond a subsistence-funding way of life. Unfortunately, that is a result of the way this government has chosen to use royalties for regions. Members travelling around regional Western Australia would be hard-pressed to find references to royalties for regions projects anywhere. In fact, that is the feedback we get from community leaders and groups that once worked with their local governments that partnered with private sector operators. They do not understand how to access this fund. The simple answer is that people living in Western Australia have very few opportunities and avenues to access this fund. That has happened systematically over the past four years, in the sense that one of the first decisions that this government made as a result of the machinery-of-government changes was to remove the power, or the strength, of the regional development commission model that was in place.

I might add, that that model was the envy of every other state and regional representative in Australia. They looked to Western Australia and the independent model that has local decision-makers who interact with other government departments and a minister who has a department that provides support. That is now missing. The way that this government has chosen to structure those development commissions has really cut them off at the knees. We still have development commissions. They are still there. I am not saying that they have disappeared. The boards have to be there under the act; it is a statutory requirement. They have a CEO who is responsible to the board, but then every staff member within that development commission is responsible to the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and the director general of the department. I am not sure how that structure was ever viewed as an efficient way of managing people. The department and the government ran a very smooth line when we asked questions repeatedly in estimates hearings to try to understand that new structure. The government has really concentrated the power of decision-makers and access to funding in Perth and decision-making in the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development to the detriment of our communities. Essentially, people are not provided with the opportunity to front up to government and say, "I've got this great project. I think that we have something that will enable our community to grow. It will fill a gap. It may innovate a service." A department within government may say, "We want to innovate the way that we deliver services to regional Western Australia because we understand that the vast distances that we have to cover to deliver those services to a small population requires us to think outside the square."

For the Nationals WA, that is what royalties for regions should be about. It should be about creating opportunities for us to think differently about delivering services. I spoke about this during, I think, a matter of public interest a couple of weeks ago when we talked about the importance of being able to work with the Department of Health and the advent of telehealth. I speak about this with great passion because in the very early days, we provided the funds to set up that structure across regional Western Australia. Through the amazing work of the people who work in that department, there is a new development every week—a new application to allow us to better serve the people of regional Western Australia. When we first started, it was essentially about making sure our hospitals and doctors were supported. It was about making sure staff in smaller hospitals in remote areas had access to the very best specialists in our tertiary hospitals and that if we needed to provide a service for an outpatient, the patient could meet with a psychiatrist or a diabetes specialist. When we were in government, I think they worked with King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women around breastfeeding specialists so that new mums did not have to travel to Perth at a very traumatic time. Now telehealth is providing other elements such as palliative care opportunities to allow people to stay at home and palliate rather than have to leave their communities at a time of great challenge for their family and themselves. That telehealth system came from a discussion with the Department of Health and a fund that sat in royalties for regions called the Southern Inland Health Initiative. I think in the end it turned out to be about \$560 million-odd and that fund covered a number of different streams. There was one to deal with the bricks and mortar of hospitals that had been left to crumble under multiple governments. It was not just the previous Labor government; it was governments of both persuasions through, I think, a department that wanted to see those hospitals shut down. If we do not invest in them, they reach a point at which surgeons can no longer operate in them; patients cannot be admitted and operations cannot be done safely.

The other part of it relates to hospitals, particularly those in Cunderdin or Pingelly in my electorate. In Pingelly, there had been one patient for many years—an aged-care patient. There was amazing infrastructure for a hospital that had been built probably sometime in the 1970s, but the state government, with taxpayers' dollars, was funding a laundry, a kitchen and the cleaning of an old and outdated facility. In discussion with Pingelly and Cunderdin and

other communities that were willing to engage with us, we asked: “If we can deliver you a better health service, would you be willing to work with us?” Royalties for regions allowed us to step outside the normal structure of the Department of Health to work with those communities to deliver a healthcare option that retained its emergency department. For people who required emergency assistance, the service provided an opportunity to be monitored and to stay overnight for maybe a couple of nights. Those hospitals are built in close proximity to independent aged-care living arrangements, so there is a synergy between those members of the community, the emergency department and the health services. It meant that instead of spending oodles of money on maintaining old and outdated infrastructure, we were spending it on bringing in health professionals who were matched to the needs of the community. In Pingelly and Cunderdin, and I think this would be true of the electorates of Moore, Central Wheatbelt and Roe, there is an ageing population. There are high rates of comorbidity—people with diabetes and heart disease and challenges with smoking addiction and those sorts of things. Instead of all the staff sitting within the hospital, those services were pushed out into the community and we started dealing with the health needs of the community. It did not come without some challenges; it required us to push the boundaries but that is what royalties for regions allowed us to do. It allowed us to change a way of thinking and to extend that service and to fill a gap when there was a shortage of doctors. Unfortunately, we see that again right now. Instead of having a conversation, as we did, to say it is not acceptable to be without a GP, a nurse practitioner or health practitioner in our town, let us see if we can find a solution to this, this government takes the attitude that it is a federal government responsibility and it will not dip its toes into that pot of money. That is a challenge in regional Western Australia, particularly in areas such as mine where the hospital operates only when a GP is in town. There has to be a GP before patients can be admitted. If people are lucky enough to live in a town such as Northam, Bunbury or Albany where there are rostered on and salaried doctors, they do not have that issue. However, in many small communities where there is a hospital, there are no salaried doctors, so we rely on GPs. The state health department relies on GPs to make sure our health system works. This government has a stake in making sure that hospitals are operating efficiently and that primary healthcare professionals are based in our towns. It is the first thing people talk to us about when they say they are considering not staying in a community. If they cannot get access to health care or send their kids to a good school, they will pack up and leave. It is as simple as that.

Over the last four years of this government, I have seen the removal of that opportunity because it has been absorbed by the things this government has chosen to spend royalties for regions on. It has chosen to pay millions of dollars to the Water Corporation for a community service obligation. I am not saying the Water Corporation should not have that community service obligation. We should absolutely have a standard fee for the first X amount of kilolitres of water for every household whether we live in regional Western Australia or the metropolitan area. That is not in question. I am saying that under the previous government, the government before that and the government before that, CSOs came directly from consolidated revenue. It now comes at, I think, the rate of about \$250 million a year, which I think has been capped out across the forward estimates. The amount of \$250 million a year directly out of royalties for regions now goes to the Water Corporation to make its budget whole. I do not think that is anywhere close to the purpose or spirit in which royalties for regions was created. I will tell members what; people in regional Western Australia know that.

I want to talk about a survey, which, I have to say, was not at our pushing or prodding; it was done by a very good regional journalist from the *Kalgoorlie Miner*, Tom Zaubmayr. Anyone who has been to Kalgoorlie will no doubt have had a conversation with him. Tom was based also in the Pilbara, so he has watched the royalties for regions journey. He has watched what royalties for regions has delivered and has a good understanding of how it has impacted communities. I think he is somebody with a good base in terms of pursuing this line of questioning. He himself undertook to call every local government in regional Western Australia to ask them their view of how royalties for regions was being spent under this Labor government compared with what the previous government did. When he had finally finished that body of work, which I am told took him some time—he called every local government, but maybe nine did not respond, and there are a few local governments in regional Western Australia—on the front page of the *Kalgoorlie Miner* of 6 November, the result of his survey comes down to the headline “Has Labor Cooked WA Country’s Golden Goose? Exclusive Statewide survey finds our regional leaders have lost faith in the management of Royalties for Regions under Labor Government”. A couple of articles were written and I will read in some of the information he garnered as he was doing this damning survey. It is not only the Nationals whom we expect to stand in this place and tell people royalties for regions are being mismanaged, but also community leaders have seen what royalties for regions can deliver, but no longer see that fund being used appropriately. This is a direct quote from the article of 6 November in the *Kalgoorlie Miner* —

Three-quarters of regional West Australian council leaders canvassed by the *Kalgoorlie Miner* in the past two months said they believed R4R was worse off than it was under the former government. Just 11 of 108 regional local government leaders said they were happy with the current direction.

That compares to 72 country WA leaders who said they were happy with the former government’s R4R regime.

I have no doubt that members from the other side will stand up and point out that local governments in regional Western Australia did very well out of royalties for regions. In fact, one of the very first programs we ran was called the country local government fund. It was designed to acknowledge that there was an enormous backlog of civil

and structural works in local governments in regional Western Australia that local governments were never going to be able to fill. Therefore, in that very first year of our government, part of the royalties for regions fund was to be used to assist local governments to deal with the backlog of infrastructure, upgrade housing and make sure that the amenities in those communities were safe and modern, and to provide them with an opportunity to start planning to really think beyond the subsistence that they had fallen into. I have to tell members that at that point in time—I was around in 2008 in the run-up to the election—really, in regional Western Australia, most people had stopped doing that planning because they could not see an opportunity under the previous Labor government. Was it Eric Ripper's government?

**Mr D.T. Redman:** Eric Ripper as the Treasurer, and Gallop.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** No; it was Alan Carpenter. Under the Carpenter government, there was no point in doing that planning. People did not have a number of plans in the bottom cupboard to pull out and say, "Have we got some plans for you", because there was nothing. If my memory serves me correctly, there was a regional investment fund at the time that was fully allocated. There was no interaction with regions. That fund was fully allocated by the government of the day, and that was essentially the regional development program. There was no Department of Regional Development. That department was created by our government to support the reinvestment into regional development commissions and to put some structure around royalties for regions. That was a commitment by our government to say that we understand how important it is to invest in the communities that generate the wealth of this state.

The article continues —

More than three-quarters of the 97 council leaders who responded said they were partially or completely unhappy with Labor's management of the fund.

Only 13 said they were unhappy with the former government's efforts.

That is fine; we are happy to take that one. We cannot please everyone, but we certainly pleased a vast majority of those communities. They certainly knew that the previous government was intent on delivering a fund that allowed them to not only fix the backlog, but also think about how they might grow, innovate services and create opportunity and jobs. All those things were true under the previous government. The article continues —

Support for Labor's R4R plan was strongest in the South West, where four of 12 councils gave their tick of approval, down from the eight who supported the Liberal-National government's plan.

The North West—including the Pilbara, where the fund made the most visible difference—had the highest level of dissatisfaction with the former government's program.

Four northern local government leaders raised issues with the previous regime, and none supported the current regime's changes.

That is fairly damning. The article is titled "... leaders have lost faith in the management of Royalties for Regions under Labor Government". It gives us no joy to stand in this house or our communities and point out the flaws in our communities and the challenges we see. We know that whilst royalties for regions is not the panacea for every problem we identify in regional Western Australia, it certainly creates an expectation that the government of the day, the executive government and the departments that are responsible for delivering services must pay attention to regional Western Australia. It is harder to deliver services out there. It is more difficult to get business cases through the Treasury boffins when they are looking at cost-benefit analyses that are reliant on large numbers of people saying that a project is worthwhile and that this many people are going to be impacted. That does not wash for someone who comes from a town like Wyalkatchem. Wyalkatchem is not where I live now, but it is my home town. For the last two weeks, I have had a deluge of contact from people who live in Wyalkatchem because their Telstra mobile phone tower continues to fail. On top of a fairly dry season, we have now had storms and all the rain we needed earlier in the year, and that is causing enormous problems, but it also creates issues with infrastructure. Communities such as Wylie and Tammin and a number of others have had their communications out for up to 21 hours. That might sound like a mere inconvenience, but I can tell members that our entire emergency services system is reliant on being able to contact people by mobile phone. If there is an issue that needs responding to by ambulance drivers, fire and emergency services and State Emergency Service workers, we get a blast on an email. When the mobile phone tower is down, that is not possible. That leaves these communities incredibly exposed.

We could work with Telstra and the federal government to resolve this issue. As well as the issue of infrastructure that does not meet the expectations of the community, we have a problem across the state because Telstra has not maintained its infrastructure appropriately. A number of batteries cut out. Telstra tells us that this is because there are multiple outages on the Western Power network and that drains the batteries. When the power goes out, the battery is supposed to kick in and keep the mobile phone tower going so that people are not disconnected from the world when they are trying to deal with a crisis. The batteries run out and then it takes an enormous amount of time for the Telstra technician to get out there, hook it back up and restore the power and telecommunications. That is an enduring, frustrating and potentially dangerous issue for our community to deal with. That is not just an issue for Wyalkatchem;

I think that, without fail, that is evident across most of the small communities within my electorate. I know it has been raised in Albany, I know it was an issue when the fires went through Esperance, and it is a challenge that I think we should be trying to deal with. It is an opportunity to apply some thinking with royalties for regions.

Fundamentally, telecommunications allow regional communities to go forward. They allow us to be safe and connected and people to run their businesses. Telecommunications are a fundamental that people do not think twice about. I can tell members that people in regional Western Australia all pay three or four times as much for the same amount of data. That is also a disincentive for people to come and live regionally. Surely, with the best and brightest, we could try to address some of those fundamentals, but again this issue cannot be addressed because we see this cost shift of funding into things like the community services obligation to the Water Corporation or the running of the orange school bus services. It has been pointed out to me in this house that that was funded by the previous government. That is not correct. I think that the previous government funded an upgrade to provide air conditioning in school buses that operate in areas where it regularly gets to above 42 degrees. It was not safe or appropriate for kids to be travelling for up to an hour in those conditions to get home. I think the funding was for seatbelts and air conditioning. It was a one-off project; it was not to run or subsidise the ongoing Public Transport Authority activity of supporting orange buses. It is really important that we have that service, but it is not something that royalties for regions should be paying for, yet that is what this government has decided. I presume that it has decided that it would prefer to spend the PTA budget on Metronet, instead of allowing royalties for regions to operate with some integrity. That is why we get angry. We get angry because we hear this government talk about \$1.5 billion city deals in the Perth metropolitan area or see investment in smart freeways or Metronet. We do not have any problem with expenditure in the Perth metropolitan area; that is not the issue. We do have a problem when it comes at the expense of the only regional development program that we have in Western Australia.

Let us get the basics right. I am happy for the government to spend money on roads in regional WA; that is what every government should do. Let us get the basics right in education and health; that is what every government should do. We should do that, but we have a fund called royalties for regions. The government went to the last election and said that it would keep that fund. It has kept it in name only. I think that people have woken up to that and to the disingenuous way that the government has behaved in rolling out this funding. It will come back to the government at the next election because when regional people lose faith, they are prepared to say that they do not agree with how the government is doing things.

The challenge for us is that I could go through a whole raft of issues or projects that I see as I travel around the state as the Leader of the Nationals WA in not only the electorates that we hold, but also the electorates that we do not. I would like to put on record that regardless of which seats we held when we were in government—the Kimberley is a case in point; it is very challenging for our party to increase our vote there—it does not mean that we do not give people the option. We will have an exceptional candidate at the next election but there is a longstanding tradition of the Kimberley not being held by the National Party. That does not mean we did not spend an extraordinary amount on those communities because they deserved it and there was genuine need. We spent time visiting them and trying to understand some of the dynamics, including whether we could use royalties for regions to try to create positive change and better outcomes.

Under the Labor government's stewardship of royalties for regions, it has cut a number of things, including the mobile phone and internet black spot program. The program has completely changed but those issues still exist. The boarding away from home allowance was also cut. I think it was cut purely on the basis that people believed it provided funding to those who should be able to afford it when, in fact, it is for families that have no other choice but to send their kids away because there is no school higher than a district high school or primary school in their region. They have to send their kids to Northam Senior High School and they board at Northam Residential College or to Moora Residential College; that is another project this government did not fund, and we had to get funding from the federal government to support it. That funding is incredibly important. We did not fund the whole lot but we said that we needed to make sure that the funding was extended.

The community pools revitalisation plan is another example. Every health minister will tell members that having access to a swimming pool is exceptionally important from a health perspective, particularly for people in areas of the north west and remote and Aboriginal communities. I listened regularly to both Kim Hames and Roger Cook as Ministers for Health talk about the benefits of having access to a swimming pool for people in regional and remote areas. The program started because of feedback from the community about how we could make sure these really expensive pieces of infrastructure, which a small number of ratepayers are responsible for, did not just close because they became unsafe. How could we continue to provide that service?

There were also investments in the Water for Food program. There was a significant investment in expanding irrigated agriculture across the state, which was about job creation and innovation. Unfortunately, although the Wellington Dam project will have great mural on it—it is going to be amazing—there is no ability to use any of the water from the dam. That continues to come at an economic cost. We have not lost just the top-up on that project. Every year that we do not solve that problem, we lose more farmers from the Collie–Myalup–Wellington area and all the opportunities that come with finding a solution to the salinity there. A desalination plant was also involved

in that project, which would have fed into the Water Corporation's infrastructure and dealt with some of the drying climate issues that we face in that region. It is all gone. This Minister for Regional Development has taken her eye off the ball completely on that project, which is incredibly disappointing because there is federal government money for it on the table. That project could have had an extraordinary outcome, but it needed to be driven. It needed to be committed to. There were solutions in that project for forestry and we hear the Minister for Forestry talk about the softwood plantation. That was a multifaceted project that needed the minister, the members who were involved and all the stakeholders to be kept together and accountable—but that has not happened and, as a result, an enormous opportunity has been lost. We cannot fathom that the program can be returned in any format because there is no longer that space within royalties for regions because of the cost shift and the attitude this government brings to spending royalties for regions, which is to underspend and use the funds for budget repair.

That is not me saying that. It is from an analysis of the state budget numbers. The trust that is responsible for providing an annual report has, in black-and-white in its reports, stated that royalties for regions has been used for significant budget repair. That is a damning indictment on a program that should be a positive news story. It should create positive opportunities. We do not care if government members want to own it. We do not care if they want to get out there and tell everyone, "Royalties for regions paid for this!" We have no problem with that; we just want to see it used appropriately. Unfortunately, over the last four years, that has not been the case. The fund has dwindled and all but disappeared in anything that we can see. We now have evidence of that in the form of local leaders saying that they are incredibly unhappy with the way the government has used the program. We have known this for four years. It is very disappointing. All I can say is that, when regional people go to the polls in March next year, I hope they remember what it was like when they saw us in control of royalties for regions and they contrast it to what the Labor government has delivered over the past four years.

**MR D.T. REDMAN (Warren–Blackwood)** [4.35 pm]: Before I get to the motion, this is the first chance I have had to make a comment today. This week is NAIDOC week and I want to acknowledge this as a week to celebrate the very rich culture that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders bring to our community. The 60 000 years of history here really puts the hairs up on the back of your neck. When we see people doing welcome to country playing the didgeridoo, it is not hard to take ourselves back into that history.

It is also Remembrance Day when we acknowledge those who have fought overseas in many conflicts and lost their lives. Today, I think we should particularly acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have been part of the wars, fighting for the freedoms that our nation so enjoys today.

I want to support the motion put in play by the Leader of the Nationals WA —

That this house condemns the McGowan government for its mismanagement of royalties for regions over the past four years, which has led to a fundamental loss of confidence in the program by regional communities.

I want to highlight that we are now nearly four years away from the 2017 election. We are now in a good position to describe what is fact—what has happened over that time. I have said before in this house and I will say it again: the Labor Party's support for the royalties for regions program was one of the greatest cons of the election in 2017. Its support for royalties for regions was a great con. Now, as the Leader of the Nationals WA has rightly highlighted, regional people have woken up to that fact. The royalties for regions program meant 25 per cent of mining and petroleum royalties gave a dedicated extra into regional Western Australia. When the program was established in 2008, it was a unique point in history. It gave recognition to a significant part of the state and acknowledged that investment is needed to support the wealth-creating part of our state.

Of course, as the Leader of the Nationals WA has highlighted, over the last four years we have seen significant substitution into the royalties for regions program. I am sure that the member for Bunbury will stand up and run the rhetoric that he has run in here in the past. We talk about spending money in areas that the consolidated account would not normally invest in; that is the appropriate place for royalties for regions money, but substitution has occurred whereby the royalties for regions funds are now being used for what has historically been funded by the consolidated account. The member for Bunbury has mentioned that schools have been funded by the consolidated account. It did fund some upgrades to schools when the year 7s went into high school. Royalties for regions funded that in regional Western Australia. That was a new investment, not an investment that was previously funded by the consolidated account. I think even Margaret River Senior High School was funded by royalties for regions because it was a new investment—a new school with a one-off fund. We will not buy the rhetoric that the member for Bunbury has brought to the table. He intimately understands it so he knows where it is at. That is clearly understood.

Over the course of the last Liberal–National government, some \$7 billion made a massive difference. For the first time, people in regional Western Australia could be somewhat aspirational about how they wanted to see their communities grow and develop. As time went on, we put in place a "Regional Development Strategy 2016–2025". Members can still pick it up on the website if they google it. This government does not have a strategy for regional development; it has not put a strategy behind the investments that make a difference in regional Western Australia. The various blueprints underpin the regional development strategy. There are blueprints of investment and where growth and investment should be made to support growth in the nine development commission regions in regional

Western Australia. I have here the blueprint for the Kimberley region. It is a substantial document that highlights the issues and opportunities that the Kimberley region presents to our economy and where we need to invest to make a difference. I found it interesting to read the goals on page 5 of this blueprint. It says —

At the heart of the Blueprint is a vision for the region and a set of measurable goals:

- In those areas where the region has a Comparative Advantage, the aim is to achieve ‘substantially above trend’ growth and development.
- In the region’s most significant areas of social disadvantage, the aim is to bring the region’s capacity into parity with normal trends that would apply for the nation or for Western Australia.
- A focus on investments that the region can drive in infrastructure, services, policy and governance that enable, support and shape change and transformation into the future.

They are clear objectives, clear goals and measurable goals to make a difference and support investment behind a strategy that makes things happen. The question we ask now is: what is the strategy of the current Labor government of investing in regional Western Australia? There is not one. Of the \$7 billion of royalties for regions investment of the last government, \$1 billion went to the Kimberley region, and rightly so. It supports the plan and the strategy.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Thank you, members.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** It is something that we are rightly proud of.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** I am calling the member to order for, I think, the second time. Could members please not interject. I do not think the member for Warren–Blackwood would like interjections.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** It is clear that there was an overriding strategy for regional investments. There were blueprints that supported where those investments should be made to make a difference. Those blueprints were developed from engagement with local communities and businesses to support the social and economic infrastructure required in those communities. That is a plan that the Labor Party could have grabbed and run with. That is not what happened. In the period from 2017 to 2021, the first budget that the state government brought out, the 2017–18 budget, took \$675 million of royalties for regions funds out of the \$4 billion fund. That is 17 per cent. In the 2018–19 budget, \$1.178 billion was taken out of the royalties for regions fund. That is 29 per cent. In the 2019–20 budget, \$1.657 billion dollars was taken out of the \$4 billion forward estimates royalties for regions fund. That is 41 per cent. Of course, in the most recent budget, \$1.682 billion, or 42 per cent, was taken straight out of the royalties for regions budget. We see the trend over the course of the last four years, with the government having washed funds out of the royalties for regions program. That does not include the underspends identified in each of the state budgets over the last four years. We can then get a very clear appreciation of where this government’s priorities sit with royalties for regions in the state budget.

I did an interesting little exercise. I googled Metronet to see what would pop up. I have printed the page that popped up when I googled Metronet. People can just put in “Metronet”; they do not even have to put in “WA”. There is a Metronet homepage that refers to the Morley–Ellenbrook line, the Thornlie–Cockburn Link, projects, latest news and the Forrestfield–Airport Link. The next hit is the Wikipedia entry for Metronet. Then there is the Metronet Facebook page. There is a line called “Metronet—Project Details”. Another go-to point is “metronet—Project—Infrastructure Pipeline”. Then there is “Metronet—Department of Transport”. A whole page comes up with all this data and information about investment in the Metronet project. What happened when I googled “royalties for regions”? First, I got “What is Royalties for Regions?” That is a question that pops up. It is still on the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development website. If we go to that site, at the bottom of the page it says “2017”. The most recent bit of information under “News & Events” is from May 2018. That is what is on the first page of the royalties for regions website. Another website has an article “Royalties for Regions and the Missing Billions”. That is what I got when I googled royalties for regions. Royalties for regions is a forgotten project. It is just not there.

It was part of the government’s rhetoric going into the 2017 election. The government said yes, it supported royalties for regions, but over the last four years, substantial resources have been whittled away and the program is not there. If we google it, there is no royalties for regions information of any substance. Royalties for regions is a \$4 billion program and we cannot even get on to a homepage to understand what royalties for regions investments have been made. That is the legacy that this government is leaving four years after taking a policy to support royalties for regions to the 2017 election.

We will face the music of an election on 13 March next year. Every single member of Parliament comes up for their job interview and they have to face their constituency and answer questions about what they did, what they are going to do and how they are going to manage being a member of Parliament in support of their communities. All of the regional Labor MPs will have to face their constituency and answer questions about what has happened to royalties for regions. What is the answer going to be? If the answer is one of integrity, it is going to be, “We washed out over half of the royalties for region program over the last four years.” If members opposite are going to answer with integrity, that is what they will say. Otherwise, they could run a spin line and say that there is \$4 billion of

royalties for regions in the budget, which there is, but, as the Leader of the Nationals WA rightly highlighted, it is in name only. It is not in a fund that supports the aspirations of regional Western Australians. There is a bit of a joke going around in the south west that there is not a South West Development Commission but a Collie development commission. Collie is going through a significant transition and rightly needs investment. I support that. I was there recently with Wayne Sanford, who is running for the National Party. He is a really nice fellow. I am looking forward to him taking a place in this chamber to support some investment in his community.

**Mr M.P. Murray** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Thank you!

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** The point I make is that every regional MP will have to look community members in the eye and tell them what happened.

**Mr M.P. Murray** interjected.

*Point of Order*

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I have a point of order.

**Mr M.P. Murray** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms S.E. Winton):** Minister, please! Member for Moore, you are first.

**Mr M.P. Murray** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister, I call you to order for the first time. I am hearing a point of order.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I am trying to hear this excellent contribution from the member for Warren–Blackwood, but I cannot hear him for the somewhat loud and, I have to say, unintelligible contributions from the member for Collie–Preston. Could you ask him to be quiet, Madam Acting Speaker, so we can listen to the member for Warren–Blackwood.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Thank you, member for Moore; that is not a point of order. Minister for Sport and Recreation, I just ask you —

**Mr M.P. Murray** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** There was no request for a withdrawal of remark. It is not a point of order. I am asking that we please hear from the member for Warren–Blackwood.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I make the point that all regional members will need to face their communities at the March election and highlight what has happened with royalties for regions over the four years of this government. If they are acting with integrity, they will make it very clear that over the last four years the government has washed out well over half of the royalties for regions program, making a massive dent in the aspirations that those communities have moving forward. As the Leader of the Nationals WA put on the table, it is not us talking about this issue. Regional communities, through local government surveys, have said that they absolutely understand what has happened. They are going to call the government out. Government members will need to take their chances with their response to the hard questions about royalties for regions.

I said to someone recently that when we first brought in royalties for regions, we engaged in a process to work out what we needed to invest in to support growth in regional Western Australia and have people making a choice to move to the regions. One of the outcomes of that was the blueprints, which gave a very clear understanding of where those investments needed to go. It was always a challenge. Our state planning policies in Western Australia give an understanding of what is happening with the population in WA. The population in metropolitan Perth is growing faster than the population in regional Western Australia. Right now, I think just under 80 per cent of the people who live in Western Australia are living in metropolitan Perth. By 2030, I think it will be 82 per cent. That is not a good outcome for our state. We want people to be moving the other way.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, people are moving the other way. People are making the choice to look at and consider—and make investments, I might add, because real estate agents in my electorate are setting records—moving to regional Western Australia. One of the reasons that they are doing that is about having space. Some people with comorbidities, who feel that they might be exposed to COVID, are choosing to move to regional Western Australia. I often make the point that if we wanted people to move, we should have just introduced a virus. It is probably a poor joke, but the point I make is that people are choosing to move to regional Western Australia. The Nationals WA and I are grateful that we made those investments to support that shift. A pipeline of property development has allowed people to invest particularly in the Pilbara region, which we know goes through boom cycles. We know that 25 per cent of royalties for regions was invested either indirectly or directly into the health sector. People have access to health services in those communities, including in the member for Collie–Preston's seat, where \$8 million went into upgrading the hospital there. There have been investments into telehealth services, which the Leader of the Nationals WA mentioned. That meant people were able to access services during the COVID-19 lockdown period—services that they otherwise would not have been able to access online.

There have been many investments from royalties for regions. There was the investment to back up the Royal Flying Doctor Service, which has meant that people who live in the furthest part of our state from metropolitan Perth are only three hours away from the best hospital that we have. I am really grateful that we made those investments. I think it would have been an absolute tragedy to have not seen and embraced the opportunities that have come off the back of the COVID-19 issues that we have had. We do not want the COVID-19 issues, but they are here, and they are supporting the flow of people into regional Western Australia. That means that investment decisions to support the fundamental infrastructure needs of people living in regional Western Australia will need to continue. In communications technology, 340 or so mobile phone towers were set up. That happened because of an investment of \$105 million from royalties for regions. That is a fundamental, basic service of communication, which in many communities, including my community of Walpole, extends to emergency services responses. If the power goes down, the emergency services communications go down. As other members have mentioned, in many cases they are measuring downtime in days and not hours.

The royalties for regions program is a program that can support decentralisation. It supports fundamental infrastructure that is needed for people to live, work and invest in communities, which is a fantastic trend we are seeing now, pleasingly. If it were not for those telehealth services and hospitals, that would be a real pinch point for those communities in supporting rejuvenated interest among people to move to the bush.

I got very direct feedback from some very senior people in the WA Country Health Service that had it not been for those investments in telehealth and hospitals, our planning for a response to the COVID-19 pandemic would have been significantly limited. A person has come up to me twice, on different occasions at different events, and thanked me, because that investment has made a massive difference to our response to what is a very unique issue in Western Australia.

As we go to the 2021 election, we must have in our minds where royalties for regions was at when we fell out of government in 2017 and where it is at now, four years later, and what has happened in those four years. In the last budget, more than half of the program was washed away through substitution. Despite what we will hear from the member for Bunbury and others, people out there understand what is going on. They understand that they can no longer apply for and get resources to support things like health services, Ageing in the Bush projects, communications technology, community infrastructure, creative industries—which play a significant role in building communities—and agricultural services, which is a substantial regional industry in Western Australia.

The National Party has come to the table today with a motion that really puts the spotlight on what has happened over the last four years. It is massively disappointing. I am seriously concerned about the trend we have seen over the last four years as successive budgets have been rolled out. The first one took out 17 per cent of funds from royalties for regions, the next one took out 29 per cent, the next one took out 41 per cent, and the next one took out 42 per cent, not including underspends. If we include underspends, it washes out well over half of the royalties for regions program.

The Labor Party did a con job on the people of regional Western Australia during the 2017 election. It committed to royalties for regions. As it has played out, it has not committed to maintaining the integrity of royalties for regions. I ask this house to support this important motion because it puts a spotlight on what the McGowan government has been doing with the royalties for regions fund. People in regional Western Australia are waking up to that. They understand what has been happening. We in the National Party support re-establishment of the integrity of that program so that people are able to support and maintain their aspirations for their communities wherever they live in Western Australia.

**MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe)** [4.55 pm]: I also rise to support the Leader of the Nationals WA and the member for Warren–Blackwood, who made very good contributions to this debate. The motion is really about the integrity of the royalties for regions program and the scheme in general. I think there have been some good explanations of some of the programs—education, health and the like. Today I would like to take the opportunity to highlight some of the excellent investments in my electorate and also some of the investments that have not quite happened, which I have been a bit disappointed about. I think that that is part of the overall package we are trying to emphasise here today.

Firstly, I would like to congratulate Tom Zaunmayr from the *Kalgoorlie Miner* on the amount of the work he did to contact all regional local governments. He contacted 108 country local governments to try to ascertain what they felt about royalties for regions. Local governments are very much the focus when it comes to the distribution of royalties for regions funds. They can identify what category the money goes to and where it will be spent in a local sense. I congratulate him for that. Tom points out that more than three-quarters of the 97 council leaders who responded to his calls said that they were partially or completely unhappy with the Labor Party's management of the royalties for regions fund. That is very telling. Only 13 local governments said that they were unhappy with the former government's effort. It was a pretty interesting study.

I will now go on and look at the likes of Kalgoorlie. The City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder Mayor, John Bowler, has said —

... Labor's efforts to keep some Royalties for Regions programs could not hide the party's diversion of funds into consolidated revenue.

**Mr M.P. Murray** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister!

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I can honestly say that if there is one person who understands regional WA, it is John Bowler. He knows what is going on in Kalgoorlie. He knows about the Labor Party's diversion of funds into consolidated revenue. He understands the whole package, member for Collie–Preston, and he certainly identified —

Several members interjected.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** As the member for Warren–Blackwood pointed out, I am also looking forward to seeing Wayne Sanford come in as the new member for Collie–Preston. He is a quality person. He is a former shire president. I look forward to him filling the vacuum that has been left by the member for Collie–Preston. He will be there. He will represent his constituents very well. We look forward to him joining the National Party after March 2021.

**Mr D.T. Redman:** There will actually not be a vacuum then—there is a vacuum now.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Time will tell. As Mr Bowler has said —

**Mr M.P. Murray:** I will put my money up now!

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Are you taking interjections, member?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I am happy to take the minister's money if he wants to throw it around.

**Mr M.P. Murray:** Here is \$300—three to one! Put it up and match it!

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I will have to focus on that afterwards, minister.

**Mr M.P. Murray:** No! You're all huff and puff!

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** My wallet is not quite as full as the minister's by the look of it. I am not too sure what the context of the minister's bet is, but, anyway, we will refocus on John Bowler, the excellent Mayor of the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder. He is quoted as saying —

“Special projects to improve facilities and services that Perth people take for granted have not been there the last three years, ....

He is identifying what is happening in Kalgoorlie–Boulder. He said also —

... with booming mining royalties flowing into State coffers, R4R should be restored to its original design—investment above normal government spending.

That is the key. As the member for Central Wheatbelt and the member for Warren–Blackwood have identified, there has been good value in many aspects of royalties for regions, whether it be health, telecommunications, education, aged care or the like.

The member for Bunbury and I have long had discussions about regional development. I remember when we were working together. At that time, he was the CEO of the South West Development Commission, and I was the chair of the Great Southern Regional Development Commission. A lot of that was good stuff. We obviously went to bat for our own regions, member for Bunbury, but we could also see the value of good projects. As the member for Warren–Blackwood pointed out, we all had our blueprint. The blueprints of the nine development commissions were very valuable documents. They gave us something to work from. It was all about local decision-making. While I am on that, I would like to acknowledge Bruce Manning, who was my CEO and a colleague of the member for Bunbury. Bruce has been well known as a fantastic CEO of the Great Southern Development Commission. I certainly would like to take this opportunity to recognise his efforts in the great southern from Albany to Woodanilling. He will be signing off shortly. When he was CEO, it was not just about Albany, as the biggest centre; it was about every single town in the great southern. I would like to congratulate him on his efforts over many years. I am sure all my colleagues in the National Party would like to do that also. Well done to him on a fantastic career in regional development.

I would like to make some comments about the annual reporting of royalties for regions funding. There used to be comprehensive annual reporting dedicated to sharing the outcomes of royalties for regions expenditure across regional WA. That has declined. We are now finding that that annual reporting is hidden in complicated budget documents, and we are struggling to pinpoint what is going on. There is a transfer and cost shifting into the consolidated fund. It is very difficult to see what is going on with the spending under the royalties for regions program. The key to the whole royalties for regions program was that it focused on addressing historical underinvestment in regional infrastructure and services, and, once that has been partially completed, spending money on improving to the next phase. It is about spending over and above the normal expectation.

I would like to talk about some of the projects in my electorate of Roe that have been very valuable for our constituents. I urge the government to switch back and get that decision-making happening at the local level. I am not here today to antagonise the member for Bunbury. I know that he is a part of it. He sees and he knows the value of local decision-making. He had his board members from Bunbury and Collie and the surrounding south west region. He had his blueprint, as we did in the great southern, and we made those local decisions. That is what I am worried about. Our development commissions are a shadow of what they were during that period from 2008 onwards. The development commissions were given funding, and that gave local governments a pathway to fund their local communities.

One of the things that upsets me most is that a lot of the phone calls that are now coming to my electorate officers and the like are, “Where can we apply for funding? We have lost track of what is happening with royalties for regions. We have lost track of the regional events scheme and the like. We are not sure how and where we can apply.”

**Mr P. Papalia:** The regional events scheme? Nothing has changed.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I am just passing on, minister, what is coming from my constituents about the regional events scheme, the regional grants scheme and the community chest program. Under the former Minister for Regional Development, the honourable member for Warren–Blackwood, who is sitting in front of me, there were plenty of those programs. He knew what was going on in each region, and he knew how important it was to those communities to get that money on the ground. It does not have to be a \$500 000 or \$4 million project; sometimes \$20 000 or \$30 000 can make a big difference,

Before I go on to some of the excellent projects, I want to point out one of the disappointments that I have had in my town of Katanning. I have a photo of the member for Warren–Blackwood, as the Minister for Regional Development at the time, at the playground at Katanning, with the chair of the Great Southern Development Commission, and the then member for Wagin, Terry Waldron, after they had announced the \$5.7 million Katanning early childhood hub. One of the children who was with the minister at the time was four years old. He is now 10 years old, and that project still has not got off the ground. Six years ago, the then minister announced that project. The funding of \$5.8 million was there. The foundations were there. The grader was smoothing off the site opposite Katanning Primary School. Everything was full steam ahead. But what happened? The now Minister for Regional Development, Hon Alannah MacTiernan, turned up in about April–May 2017 and there we are, still no further. It is quite disappointing. Mothers were getting ready for the early childhood hub when their children were going into kindy, preprimary and the like—those kids are now about ready to go into high school! This sort of thing is very upsetting to our community. The funding was there and the shire was ready to go. I will say that it is looking promising again. I congratulate the Shire of Katanning for its perseverance. I believe there is movement at the station, but, unfortunately, six years down the track. That is a real downer, from my perspective.

One of the other great spends of royalties for regions money, which I am sure the Minister for Tourism is well and truly aware of, is the Harmony Festival. I think the minister attended the festival last year. It was fantastic to see those five or six —

**Mr P. Papalia:** Was I the first multicultural minister to go? I think I might’ve been.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I think we had one or two ministers attend prior to that, but it was great to see the minister there in Katanning at the Harmony Festival. It is a very important multicultural event.

An opposition member interjected.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** He is the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests; Tourism and the like. It was great to see the minister there in Katanning. Our multicultural community in Katanning has a fantastic Harmony Festival, and there has been support for that through the royalties for regions program. That is a positive.

Some of the other more global projects that I will mention are the patient assisted travel scheme and community resource centres, which are fantastic in our smaller communities. I always look at towns like Hopetoun and Ravensthorpe, where CRCs do a great job, as well as in many of the smaller communities throughout Roe. I know that the member for Moore is a great advocate of the Country Age Pension Fuel Card. We are certainly very proud of that program through the royalties for regions scheme. Many of our seniors right through the regions are very happy when their card arrives in the mail. The regional men’s health program is another initiative that has such value. I want to compliment the likes of Ross Ditchburn and Justin Taylor, two local farmers who have both been great footballers and so forth in their time. They contribute to that program. They go out and talk to people in the regions. That program is very much appreciated and was very much supported in its infancy by royalties for regions.

Another project is the boarding away from home allowance. Our leader is very strong on that one and we are looking to restore it to its original idea, because I believe it has been run down. The funding has been pulled out. This is a project that the Isolated Children’s Parents Association really appreciates—it pointed that out to me the other day.

A couple of final projects are in the town of Esperance. There was some fantastic spending of royalties for regions money in Esperance. When I walk along the Esperance waterfront in the morning, I see the plaque that the member for Warren–Blackwood unveiled. There was \$21 million spent on the Esperance waterfront. The community reckons it is the most fantastic spend of royalties for regions money that they have seen. That is certainly a real highlight for me. Esperance Primary School received \$10 million. There was \$18 million for hospital upgrades. Esperance Residential College received \$14 million for upgrades. It is a fantastic residential college that draws students from all over the place, including north of Kalgoorlie–Boulder. That is also a real highlight to me. The Esperance Indoor Sports Stadium received \$7 million. I was there in 2016 when the then minister, who is now sitting in front of me, announced that funding. I was there with Graham Mackenzie and others from the basketball community in Esperance. It was fantastic to see. The Minister for Sport and Recreation opened it recently, but, unfortunately, he forgot to invite the local member until five to five on the previous day; nonetheless, it is a fantastic —

*Withdrawal of Remark*

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** We did not do the invite. The shire did the invites, thank you very much! I would like an apology, please.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** The sports stadium is a fantastic —

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Would you like to withdraw that?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** The sports stadium is —

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Would you like to withdraw that comment?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I will withdraw it if you like, minister.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Thank you.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** The sports stadium was a fantastic spend of \$7 million of royalties for regions funding. A TAFE is now being built in Esperance. I am very pleased that the government is continuing with that build; I think it is a great spend as well. Once again, I was there when the member for Warren–Blackwood and the member for Scarborough announced \$10 million each from their portfolios for that. These are examples of royalties for regions spending that have been fantastic.

**MR I.C. BLAYNEY (Geraldton)** [5.15 pm]: Over the summer, I spent a number of weeks going over press releases and royalties for regions information to itemise and add up what had been spent in my electorate.

A member: Was that in summer, was it?

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** Yes. It is quite warm in my part of the world in summer, so sitting in your air-conditioned office is not a bad place to be.

I have one folder with information on expenditure in the years of the Barnett government and another on what has been spent under the current government. I have to admit that I have to update the folder post budget—I have not done that yet. That job is awaiting the end of Parliament.

**Mr K. Michel** interjected.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** The member can interject as much as he likes because I cannot hear him.

**Mr M.P. Murray:** I have the same problem.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** Yes, we have something in common, minister.

Despite having been involved in royalties for regions all the way through those years, I was actually surprised at the volume of undertakings in Geraldton. We always said that it changed the face of regional Western Australia and it certainly change the face of Geraldton. The two projects that I had the most contact with were the community chess projects, which were small projects, and the regional grants scheme, which were bigger projects. I will walk through a few of them to show the spread of projects that were funded. The Mid West Ports Authority has started a small grants program of its own in Geraldton, and I know that other port authorities have done that. I suspect that part of Mr Bowler's problem is that his electorate does not have a port authority, because it does not have a port!

In Geraldton, the Wonthella Bowling Club received \$13 900 for shade replacement works; the Geraldton Volunteer Marine Rescue Group received \$5 000 for a radio over internet protocol; the Spalding Park Golf Club received \$30 000 for a street hydrant fire solution for the redeveloped club; the Geraldton and District Badminton Association received \$50 000; and the Batavia Coast Replica Boat Association received \$5 000 for replacement sails. Other funding included \$3 300 to Uniting Church Homes' Juniper Hillcrest Residential Care for hairdressing improvements; the Scouts WA's Wooree Scout Group received \$2 700 for hall improvements; and the City of Greater Geraldton received \$25 000 for grave restoration works at the Greenough Pioneer and Old Walkaway Cemeteries. ATLAS, or Access to Leisure and Sport, is an organisation that provides sporting facilities for disabled people and it received \$50 000. Chrysalis House, which is the women's refuge in Geraldton, received \$117 000 for building extension works. The Geraldton Universities Centre received \$138 000; the marine finfish research and development centre project received \$149 000; the City of Greater Geraldton Regional Library received \$300 000 for redevelopment works; and the Leaning Tree school development project received \$40 000. Chrysalis House received a further \$134 000 for its building extension, while the Eadon Clarke Sporting Complex received \$500 000 out of \$3.3 million, the Geraldton Regional Art Gallery received \$33 500 for art storage racks, and stage 2 of the marine finfish research and development centre project received \$248 000 out of \$599 000.

The Geraldton Cemetery board received \$65 500 for re-use water connection; the Geraldton Golf Club, \$94 500 for water facilities; and the Geraldton Turf Club, \$203 000 out of \$258 000 for upgrades. The Western Australian Institute of Skin Cancer Medicine and Rural Health received \$105 000 for the non-melanoma skin cancer register and research initiatives in Geraldton; Access to Leisure and Sport, again, \$10 000 for a universally designed challenge course scoping in Geraldton; Geraldton Lions Club, \$10 000 out of \$55 000 for a caravan; Chrysalis Support

Services, again, \$123 000 for an upgrade to the women's refuge; the City of Greater Geraldton, \$43 500 for the midwest China Connect website; and Hope Community Services, \$185 000 for Mount Hill community farm, which is a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre. Access to Leisure and Sport—ATLAS—again, received \$150 000. I have mentioned ATLAS a number of times because in the other place Hon Darren West has said that during the eight years of government, ATLAS did not get any money from the government. Bundiyarra Aboriginal Community Aboriginal Corporation received \$272 000 for Bundiyarra Muguri, Geraldton; Geraldton Cemetery board, \$109 000 for security fencing; Leaning Tree Community Schools, \$77 500; and Wandina Primary School P&C and Derna Park, \$149 000 out \$249 000 for a nature playground.

Most of those grants for projects in my community are now basically unavailable. When people come and ask me if there is anywhere they can get money, I send them to the development commission, but there is literally no funding there for those projects.

The other problem in old regional cities, such as Geraldton, is that they have a lot of old buildings. It is really, really hard to get money to fix up old buildings. The National Trust of Australia and organisations like that have very little money to give away every year so for a lot of these projects, as I said, there is nowhere else to go. Sometimes royalties for regions funds were used to cover 100 per cent of project costs; other times, money came from other places. It is catalyst money. If people could say that they had X dollars available from something like royalties for regions, other people would put money into their project as well, because a lot of organisations and government bodies work that way these days. Some of the projects were funded 100 per cent by royalties for regions, including the foreshore works in Geraldton, the TAFE facilities and the Geraldton Universities Centre facilities. Like most other regional areas, Geraldton had an investment plan of \$220 million set aside, which was part of the midwest investment plan for 2011–12. It was being very carefully allocated. When there was the change of government, I understand that somewhere between \$70 million and \$80 million of the fund was still in the account, and of course, it was pulled back into central Treasury, which John Langoulant assured me was the normal thing to do. That money was allocated, but the paperwork, if you like, had not been finished. There was a grant of \$20 million to upgrade the Geraldton Museum, around \$20 million to the road between Meekatharra and Wiluna, about \$17 million to work on Abrolhos Islands and the rest to go into the development of Geraldton Health Campus.

The royalties for regions fund paid for some once-in-a-lifetime projects. Unless there is a special fund like royalties for regions, those projects do not happen. Members who know Geraldton would know that there is a major intersection in the industrial area of Geraldton, the Place Road–Flores Road intersection. Redoing that intersection cost a total of \$7.3 million, and royalties for regions provided \$2.8 million of that. The Geraldton Universities Centre stage 2 buildings cost \$3 million, and that was 100 per cent royalties for regions money. Developments at Geraldton Airport received \$2.755 million. The Building Better Regional Cities program, which the city council and Rudd government put money into, received nearly \$14 million from royalties for regions out of \$29 million. Geraldton has the oldest railway station in Western Australia. It was restored and turned into a tourist centre. Royalties for regions provided \$1 million out of \$1.85 million for that project. The city council and federal government also put some money into that project. Work at the Geraldton Residential College was funded \$2 million out of \$2.6 million by royalties for regions. The new Foodbank building in Geraldton received \$2.14 million out of \$3.29 million from royalties for regions.

On the Wonthella Oval lights, I remember one of the members of the Towns Football Club, which I happen to belong to, said to me one night, “We’ve been trying to get these 500 lux lights at this oval for 40 years.” He said that they had checked and ovals in Broome, Port Hedland, Karratha and Bunbury had lights and the oval in Albany was getting them. He asked, “Why can’t we have 500 lux lights?” I said, “Right, that is something I’m gonna do. We’re gonna get these lights.” In the end, royalties for regions provided \$590 000 for that \$1.5 million project. Others that contributed to that project include the AFL, which gave us \$100 000, and the City of Greater Geraldton, the Department of Sport and Recreation and the Great Northern Football League. As I said, quite often, when people start to try to get money for projects like the Wonthella Oval lighting, the first money they get is from royalties for regions. They then have to find other money, but other people see that they have royalties for regions money and are prepared to come in. I do not know how many other regional cities have got money directly out of the AFL, but I suggest to members that there are probably not many.

The Monsignor Hawes Heritage Centre in Geraldton received \$1.5 million of a total project cost of \$7.1 million, because it was restoring the Roman Catholic cathedral at the same time. For that, the locals had to raise \$3 million. Believe me, it is not easy to fundraise \$3 million for a project like that. The Central Regional TAFE services hub received \$2 million for a \$3 million project. The Geraldton Cemetery board received \$1.3 million of a total project cost of \$1.46 million for capital works. That was for a hall next to the crematorium. Once again, people in Perth take it for granted that if they go to a service at a crematorium, they can probably go straight next door to have a function. Rather than going somewhere else like a pub, they can have it all there. We got one, but the only reason we got one was because we had royalties for regions funds.

The Beresford foreshore coastal protection enhancement project that Minister Saffioti opened a while ago received \$12.7 million from royalties for regions for that \$23 million project. As it was, because of the downturn in the mining sector, the tenders for that project came in way under what had been budgeted for it. Minister MacTiernan

gave us a commitment that money would stay in the midwest and has agreed to spend \$3 million of the money left over to build jetties to service the ferries that go to the Abrolhos Islands. I have not come across any royalties for regions money in Geraldton that one could say was wasted. All the projects were done thoroughly and properly.

If members want to look at royalties for regions projects, the statewide projects are interesting, including the Country Age Pension Fuel Card and the mobile phone project, which, seriously, made an enormous difference. I think royalties for regions funded 100 per cent of the \$94.5 million police and emergency services communications project and provided funding to air-cool all public schools. It funds the police officers regional incentive scheme, KidSport, the Regional Telecommunications Project, regional visitor centres, the National Rural Generalist Pathway, the boarding away from home allowance increase, the telecentre network and the regional pools program. All these things make a difference in communities. To be quite honest, as I was saying to someone today, some people live in local government areas in Perth that have literally a couple of hundred million dollars sitting in reserves in their accounts, and I think the City of Joondalup is one of them. That is an impossible dream for, I think, every local government in regional WA. They just do not have that sort of money.

Sooner or later, we will be back in government and one of the future projects in our area that we are looking at, as we have announced already and that we will support, is a midwest rescue helicopter that will cover the area from Badgingarra to Shark Bay and the Abrolhos Islands out to Mt Magnet. That has captured the locals' imagination. They can see the value in that. There are not a huge number of people in the midwest, but there are a lot of people —

**Mr D.T. Punch** interjected.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** Member, we have allocated \$30 million over five years.

**Mr D.T. Punch:** What happens at the end of five years?

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** Then it will have to be self-sustaining, hopefully.

Several members interjected.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** I am a hardworking local member; I do not have the member for Bunbury's extensive knowledge.

*Point of Order*

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I do not think the member for Geraldton is seeking interjections, and I ask that the member for Bunbury desist.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L. Mettam):** Member for Geraldton, are you seeking interjections?

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** No; not at all, thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Bunbury, can you please allow the member for Geraldton to speak.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** We have allocated \$50 million to coastal erosion, which will be available on the basis of a one-to-one allocation, so it will have to be matched. For the regional cities program, \$250 million is allocated over five years, which is competitive. One of the really good things about royalties for regions is that decisions are made locally. We did not have to go to Perth and beg to some bureaucrat who usually could not care less whether we lived or died, or were there or not. We were asked quite regularly, "Why do you live in that place anyway?"

The Mid West Development Commission did an exceptional job of allocating this money and seeing it was spent properly, which is why money was left in the accounts when the government changed. As the local member, one of the things I am constantly being asked is: what replaced it; where can we get this sort of money? We have an organisation in Geraldton called the Friends of Geraldton Gardens, which wants to build a botanic garden. It has started doing that; it is an ideal royalties for regions project. It is a smallish amount of money that would build a really good long-term community asset. The Mission to Seafarers needed some money, but unfortunately it did not qualify under royalties for regions because it serves only foreigners. It needed funds, but could not get them anywhere. The Towns Football Club, which now has its lights, cannot have an Australian Football League match until it has proper coaches' boxes. It has nowhere to go. The hockey ground needs new artificial turf and it has nowhere to go. We need money for the basketball stadium, but once again, it may be able to do it itself. I think it was an exceptional program.

I will acknowledge a program, if I may. I usually get invited to the announcement of the Regional Economic Development Grants scheme, which the Mid West Development Commission is running now. The RED scheme is quite different; it is an entrepreneurial sort of program. Its aim is to give someone with a good business idea a bit of extra money to get them over the line, if you like. I have been to most of the RED scheme announcements. I give credit where it is due; I think it is quite a good program. I always find it interesting to see who is being funded and what they are doing. They tend to be youngish entrepreneurial people, who are the sort of people who generate jobs. The whole basis of the RED scheme is to get new enterprises going so they can employ people. It is not a huge amount of money but the commission might find it gets a good bang for its buck out of that money. I think a renewed royalties for regions program would include something like a RED scheme, because, as I said, I think that in a small way, it is doing a good job.

That is the end of my contribution.

**MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Nationals WA)** [5.34 pm]: I believe there was an arrangement that the opposition would have a couple of hours, and then other members would have a chance. That was the agreement, which, obviously, the member for Bunbury was not prepared to honour, but we will press on. I wish to make this contribution on this excellent motion.

**Mr W.J. Johnston** interjected.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** The minister will have his chance later.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L. Mettam):** Minister, the member for Moore jumped to his feet first.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** I am not disputing your call.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Sorry.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** I am saying how stupid the National Party is because this is pointless.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Thank you, minister. The minister does not have the call. I ask you to ask him to wait his turn.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** I think we will proceed with your contribution, member for Moore.

**Mr D.T. Punch** interjected.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I will stay and listen to the reply because I am always very interested in what the government has to say about royalties for regions. The brazenness of a government that has absolutely smashed this scheme never ceases to amaze me when it talks about royalties for regions as though it somehow exists or is something it values. It is incredibly thick-skinned of the member for Bunbury to sit in his seat and shout at me when he knows very well the contribution royalties for regions made over many years when he was intimately involved as a public servant in its delivery. To consistently trash the contribution of royalties for regions over the years is a disgraceful effort on his part.

**Mr D.T. Punch** interjected.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** We ask that he wait his turn now.

As we know, this motion condemns the McGowan government for its mismanagement of royalties for regions over the past four years, which has led to a fundamental loss of confidence in the program by regional leaders.

**Mr D.T. Punch** interjected.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Thank you. Can the member for Bunbury sit there quietly for a moment?

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Bunbury, the member for Moore has indicated he is not taking interjections, so can he be heard in silence.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Thank you, Acting Speaker, it is very good of you to protect me from the member for Bunbury.

As we know, the Leader of the Nationals WA has outlined the results of a survey of regional leaders undertaken by the press in the Kalgoorlie area. That has led to an understanding of just how poorly mismanaged the program is by this McGowan government. Many, many regional leaders have lost confidence in the management of royalties for regions.

It is on the basis of that feeling, which is manifestly expressed in that survey, that we have come to the house with this motion today. What is mismanagement? I suppose we could say mismanagement is when we mismanage a \$1 billion-a-year program that has delivered unprecedented community economic development right across regional areas and right across the state. As has been said in this place today, regardless of which seat we held, we could participate in royalties for regions. It did not matter where people came from: Mandurah, Dawesville, Geraldton, Moore, Bunbury or the Kimberley. They benefited from a huge amount of investment. When the Pilbara was held by the Labor Party, a huge amount of money was spent during the previous government when the Nationals had carriage of the royalties for regions program. It was a huge amount of money because it is obvious that it exhibited in stark detail a lack of concern and care for a region that had contributed so much to the state's economy for many years. Very little care had been shown for the people in the communities they lived in and their facilities. Accommodation was stretched. People were virtually living in car bodies and they were camping out under trees. There were almost no facilities for recreational support of any nature. The Nationals in government turned that around well before there was a member in the Pilbara area; well before we even considered the Pilbara might be one day held by the Nationals. It is our fervent wish that the Pilbara will once again be represented by a member who is strong, has at their heart that community's best interests and knows how to go about protecting and developing the interests of the Pilbara. I hope that in March the people of the Pilbara turn out in big numbers to vote 1 for Scott Bourne, so that they get the strong representation they have so sorely lacked over the last four years. Has anybody actually heard from the member for Pilbara in this place? No. We rarely even see the member for Pilbara in this place, let alone have him make a strong contribution like the contribution that Scott Bourne will make if he is elected in March next year. That would be a turnaround for the people of the Pilbara. They will see strong representation. They will see someone standing up for them.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister for Tourism!

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** They will be represented by someone who actually knows how to put the case for what is required. He knows what is fundamentally required for the Pilbara. He lives in the Pilbara, he understands it intimately, and he will represent the Pilbara in a way that has not been done in the last four years. We will see that replicated right across the state.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** Fifty bucks on Kevin Michel! Come on; put your money where your mouth is!

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Why is the minister waving money around? Is the minister trying to make a donation to the Nationals WA?

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members! The member for Moore has indicated that he is not seeking interjections. Can we all hear the member for Moore in silence as he completes his speech.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I thought it was actually an offer of a donation towards the campaign for the Nationals in the Pilbara, because certainly that would be a good way to get good representation for the Pilbara. Vote 1 for Scott Bourne, vote 1 for strong representation for the Pilbara, and let us get rid of the poor representation that has occurred over the last four years in the Pilbara!

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister!

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** We want strong representatives right throughout the regions. We want the member for Geraldton to come back and represent Geraldton for the next four years. He has been a strong advocate for his community over the past terms of government. He will continue to be a strong advocate for his community. In March, if the people of Geraldton want strong representation, if they want royalties for regions delivered into their community, if they want to be represented by a Nationals member who lives in their area and whose party has representation of the regions at its very core, then they should vote 1 for the member for Geraldton. People should vote for Ian Blayney in Geraldton in March next year. While they are there, they should cast their vote to support the very, very strong candidate that we have in the Agricultural Region, Natasha Colliver.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Excuse me, member for Moore; the member for Bunbury is raising a point of order.

*Point of Order*

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** Madam Acting Speaker, this sounds more like an election trail campaign speech rather than someone actually talking to the motion. Can you please ask the member to return to the motion?

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L. Mettam):** Thank you, member for Bunbury. I do think that the content relates to the thrust of the motion and I do not believe that is a point of order.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker. Of course, you are absolutely right in your judgement. We are talking about putting an end to the mismanagement of royalties for regions under this government. The way to do that is to elect members of the Nationals. Voters in Geraldton should vote 1 for Ian Blayney and, while they are at it, they should cast a vote for that very strong advocate for the Geraldton region who has put her name forward, Natasha Colliver, and ensure that she gets to take her place in Parliament and represent the people of the Agricultural Region. I know that she will do a fantastic job when she is put into this place by the people of Geraldton, Moore, Central Wheatbelt and Roe, because they deserve the sort of contribution that she will make to their futures.

We have heard about the mismanagement of this government. We know that the \$1 billion-a-year program that used to be provided—all the unprecedented infrastructure, support, economic development and community development programs—has been largely trashed. We know that hundreds of millions of dollars are now being spent every year on what we would call substitutions. The royalties for regions program is now paying to provide water to communities. I cannot think of a developed country on Earth that does not have a water supply scheme for its people. I do not know why in Western Australia, uniquely in Australia, a program that is dedicated to regional development is asked to fund people's fundamental right to have fresh and clean water when they turn on their taps. That is just bizarre. We have seen the funding that has been given to services such as school buses, and we know, too, that huge amounts of money have been underspent and returned to Treasury every year. As the custodians of royalties for regions, we knew that we had to factor in that underspend and keep programs rolling. This government has let programs peter along and peter out, which has meant that it can return all that money back to Treasury, because if the money is unspent, it hits a cap and flows back to Treasury. That is the way the fund was set up. That was the fail-safe mechanism to protect against large amounts of money sitting inactive in the program. The government is using that mechanism in a perverse way, not to keep the fund going, but to actually stymie and throttle the fund and take away some of those things that we know we need in our communities.

We have heard about programs such as the community chest. That is an obvious example of how royalties for regions was being delivered into communities. That program delivered small grants to community groups that had an aspiration to develop a program or project or to help their communities in some way or to help their communities grow. That program has now gone. We have also seen the branding for royalties for regions disappear. When we visited projects that were delivered by royalties for regions, we used to see the royalties for regions symbol of the very elegant little green and yellow strongperson. I only see that now in places where some cheeky people who know the value of that scheme keep putting those signs up. I do not know who those people are, but I thank them for keeping that recognition of the scheme going.

This is not careless mismanagement; it is deliberate mismanagement that is aimed at destroying the reputation and recognition of the royalties for regions program. The McGowan government is trying to characterise it as simply state government funding instead of a special program for special purposes to provide for the aspirations of communities. In doing so, the government is trying to destroy those communities' aspirations for the future and take away their ability to access royalties for regions funding. Community chest is an obvious example; the regional grant scheme is another. That was a scheme for slightly larger projects. It provided an avenue for every group that needed up to \$300 000, I think it was, for a program. Those groups could put forward their schemes, and decisions were then made by the local development commission. This is the important part: a lot of these decisions were being made at very local levels. The local development commissions in the wheatbelt, midwest, south west, great southern, the Pilbara, the Kimberley and the goldfields could make those decisions and allocate funding to programs that they knew would make a difference in their communities. That was local decision-making, as opposed to the monolith called the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, which has had the agricultural, fisheries and regional development departments shoved into it. It has done away with local empowerment and stripped the development commissions of any real role or capacity to make any judgements and of everything that was needed to ensure that we had strong, local decision-making. It has centralised that decision-making in Perth, and, in doing so, has further helped to encourage the destruction and eventual demise of royalties for regions, which is this government's aim. That is what we are seeing happen.

To counter that type of thinking, we need strong regional members. We need strong regional advocates who are not going to come to the city and find themselves in a room in which they owe their position and advancement to the support of a much larger group of people who are all based in the city. We see that type of arrangement in both the Liberal and Labor Parties. People need a good local member. An example in the past may have been the member for Collie–Preston. I do not know; he may have been a good member at one stage. I am sure he has been a good member over the years, but he is only one small part of a much bigger whole. It is the whole of caucus that makes the decisions, not the few country members who may struggle over the line occasionally, and that makes a big difference. If a party thinks about nothing else except the advancement of regional Western Australia, there is an energy and a capacity to drive the development of the regions. That is lacking in both of those bigger parties. We see that with announcements from their leadership.

I remember that on the Wednesday before the last election, it was announced that the Liberal Party would cut \$800 million from royalties for regions over two years. That announcement was made by a city-based party when it was facing some difficulty in making budget decisions. It decided to cut royalties for regions. I have a report from 11 April 2017, soon after the Labor government was elected, in which some announcements were made by the Minister for Regional Development, Hon Alannah MacTiernan, with the member for Mandurah. It is about making sure there would be fewer ribbon-cutting opportunities, stating that town beautification projects would not be funded and it stated that too much was being spent on amenities. We can read that as too much was being spent on royalties for regions. It did not take too long; I think it was less than a month after the election. In opposition, the then leader of the Liberal Party announced an ending to the royalties for regions program. An article states that the member for Central Wheatbelt stood up very strongly for royalties for regions to ensure that that did not happen. Country people need to be assured that if they want a strong advocate for the royalties for regions program, they really need to support regional-based candidates who come from their communities. Delma Baesjou in Albany and Louise Kingston on the south west ticket down there are examples. These two strong women are strong advocates and have put forward their names to commit to representing their communities. Again, if the people of Albany and the south west want good representation, they can look no further than Delma Baesjou and Louise Kingston.

The member for Collie–Preston made some interjections and threw some money around earlier on. We know he is retiring and we all look forward to listening to his valedictory speech in the near future. With his retirement, there will be a change of representation for Collie and a very real choice for the people of Collie. Wayne Sanford has put forward his name. He is a very strong local advocate who is very well-connected in his community, in local government and business from representing the community over many years. He is an excellent choice for the people of Collie. I am sure that Wayne will represent Collie and they will vote 1 for Wayne Sanford in March.

I will now look at Kalgoorlie. Kalgoorlie is a very interesting place. It is a unique community with a unique history and a unique set of issues. It is a mining community—the oldest one up there—and the biggest outback city in Australia. It has all the attributes of a city but, with it, a lot of the issues that come from being in a mining area,

including a lack of community infrastructure and things that people would normally think they would find in a community of that size. It needs a strong advocate. In Rowena Olsen, people will find a very strong advocate for Kalgoorlie. She is someone who will step up to the plate and represent Kalgoorlie in such a great way. In March, if people in Kalgoorlie want a strong advocate for royalties for regions and strong representation for their area, they should vote 1 for Rowena Olsen. They should also support Nick Fardell, our excellent candidate in the Mining and Pastoral Region. He roams far and wide across the mining and pastoral area, everywhere from the Kimberley to the coast down at Eucla. People will find him in his old LandCruiser, getting around and spreading the message about royalties for regions and his support for regional Western Australia, which is what we all aim to do after we get rid of the oppressive regime we have at the moment and return royalties for regions to its glory.

While I am talking about why it is so important to have royalties for regions, I will mention a few of the projects that have and have not been funded over the years. A little while ago, the member for Geraldton, the member for North West Central and I visited Kalbarri. It is an area that I have had the pleasure to represent over the last eight years, but it will be moving to the seat of North West Central. We hope that the people of North West Central vote in big numbers for Vince Catania so that they can have a very strong representative for Kalbarri. The member for Geraldton and myself, along with Vince Catania, visited Kalbarri a little while ago and we got a sneak peek at the new skywalk before it opened. It is so beautiful. It is there because of the “Mid West Investment Plan 2011–2021”, the Mid West Development Commission’s clear thinking, the support of this former Minister for Regional Development, Hon Terry Redman, and the support of royalties for regions. They are the reasons that wonderful project was developed and has been delivered. It is not because the current Minister for Environment is the current minister or because the current Minister for Regional Development is the current minister; it is because of a program put in place by the former government, this former minister and that former development commission, which has now been stripped of all its funding abilities to drive its community. The project has resulted in a wonderful facility, which is bringing many tourists to the area.

**MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury)** [5.56 pm]: I would like to start by agreeing with the member for Warren–Blackwood that it is important to acknowledge this as NAIDOC week. I also acknowledge that it “Always Was, Always Will Be”. I think it is important to remember that on this day, and equally important that we acknowledge the veterans. I acknowledge that, member for Warren–Blackwood.

For the last half hour, I have listened to what was essentially a sales pitch for the Nationals WA. Unlike what the member for Moore asserted, I do not intend to stand here and trash royalties for regions. In fact, I do not think I have ever trashed royalties for regions in this place. The McGowan Labor government recognised the value of royalties for regions, embraced it and confirmed that it would continue under a McGowan Labor government. I do not think that is in dispute. But what is in dispute is the administration of royalties for regions and the role that the hypothecated fund has placed, certainly taking this state to the brink of bankruptcy back in 2017. It needed to be better managed. The member for Moore talked about the definition of “mismanagement”. Its definition, certainly in a corporate sense, is all about wrongdoing—inappropriate doing—but really, the member for Moore was referring to mismanagement in the context that the McGowan Labor government is not doing what the National Party wants it to do. The National Party does not agree with the way we spend the fund or how we spend it, even though, at the end of the day, it is still taxpayers’ money. As part of this government’s commitment to regional Western Australia, in this financial year coming, we are rolling out the largest ever spend for regional Western Australia’s infrastructure. The infrastructure is going to leave a lasting legacy for the people of Western Australia, improve health, improve safety, improve educational outcomes and improve job opportunities—all the very outcomes that I know are reflected in the regional development plan that the National Party commissioned in 2016, eight years after it had been spending royalties for regions funding. I will come to that shortly.

I want to go back over a few comments made by the members, just to correct the record. The member for Central Wheatbelt referred to the concept of regional development commissions being weakened under this government. I remember the Duncan review in 2010, “Structuring Regional Development for the Future: A Review of the Functions and Responsibilities of Regional Development Commissions”. The key recommendation from the Duncan review was to replace all nine development commissions with one central, metropolitan-based regional development commission alongside a regional development department. Why would we need to have two centrally based organisations, funded through the taxpayer, duplicating effort and causing tension? The government of the day rejected that report and I think it was because there was a bit of a backlash from the regions. Over the ensuing period, the Department of Regional Development gradually increased its influence. There was a great deal of tension about how to spend \$1 billion dollars a year, making sure it went to meaningful and appropriate projects.

I do not take away from the fact that there were a lot of meaningful projects. But ultimately, at the end of the day, to cope with the diverse issues that were being presented to the minister of the day, there was a clear framework in which all regional development proposals went through the department and were signed by the director general. At that point, regardless of what legislation says, regional development commissions became advisory bodies to a central department that then reported to the minister, so I do not know how the member for Central Wheatbelt can complain when this government has formalised that arrangement and made it far simpler by reducing the back-office functions of regional development commissions and centralising the administration, but still leaving those boards in place

with a very strong role reporting directly to the minister. It is quite fallacious to argue that regional development commissions have been undermined by some sort of strategy of this government to gradually whittle away at royalties for regions. That is not the case.

Another issue that the member for Central Wheatbelt raised was the views of local governments. Local governments look to any source of funding. I remember when the country local government fund was withdrawn by the Liberal–National government in 2015 and the deep despair of many local governments that had put plans in place. Some had half-completed projects and the rug was pulled out from under them overnight. There is a sense of innocence that comes from the National Party on these issues, but those are the facts of the matter.

I come to the member for Warren–Blackwood. He spoke about the initial legislation governing royalties for regions being 25 per cent of mining royalties. He knows full well that between 2008 and 2013, GST revenue was going down and royalties were increasing, so there was this funny pressure on state revenue with essentially a decline of funding that could go into consolidated revenue and support all services across government, but an increase in the revenue going straight into a hypothecated fund that could no longer support the core functions of governments under the agreements between the National and Liberal Parties. In 2013, that led to the cap of \$1 billion being put in place because of the increasing pressure that royalties for regions was putting on the budget. We come to this first point of substitution, and members know I have raised this matter in the past and I will continue to raise it. In 2013, royalties for regions funded the consolidated revenue component that funded regional development commissions and the Department of Regional Development. That is a straight substitution of funding, and it was done because of the increasing pressure on the budget at that time and the fiscal issues the government was facing. I understand why it was done, but I do not understand why the National Party continually talks about substitution when it started it, and it started it with projects such as the low-level Gascoyne River bridge. The Regional Development Trust, of which the member for Roe was a member at the time, signed off on its report acknowledging its concern that the National Party, as part of government, was now involved in substitution of funding for consolidated revenue. That is what happened.

I note that the member for Warren–Blackwood mentioned the regional blueprints, and quite rightly. I was a part of those blueprints, but they came at the end of 2015–16 when royalties for regions had been spent for a considerable time. It was clear, certainly from reviews such as the Langouant review, that there was a complete absence, and that was really an after-the-fact attempt to put some sort of strategic infrastructure around the expenditure of royalties for regions. The member talked about mismanagement. I can remember all the phases of royalties for regions. There was the sudden rush to a grants program without a real clear focus of what the outcome should be, driven by regional development commissions. Then there was a withdrawal of the grants program back into one statewide grants program. Then SuperTowns was suddenly announced, with nobody quite knowing what that program meant and a lot of after-the-fact design of that program. Royalties for regions lurched from program to program in an attempt to try to put some structure around the fundamental question of how to spend \$1 billion or more a year in a meaningful way. I totally support the notion of the whole structural issue around planning and having the strategic direction that was put in place, but it was put in place at the end of the royalties for regions' period under the coalition's administration, not at the beginning, when it should have been.

I just wanted to set the record straight on a few of those components, because they go to the heart of the disingenuousness of the criticism of our government's management of royalties for regions. I hoped this afternoon that we could have had a much more mature debate about the role of royalties for regions, which is taxpayer's money, in the future and how we can overcome this sort of debate we have continually in this place by which the National Party says to us that we are mismanaging the funds and we are not doing the right thing, and we have to defend ourselves, rather than the National Party having some clear policy focus about the future and saying how we might address the important issues and challenges facing regional WA, which this side of the house considers all the time going into the future. As part of that, I note again that this government's commitment goes well beyond royalties for regions. As the member for Moore said, royalties for regions was a brand. The National Party kept sticking green signs up all over the place branding things as royalties for regions, but in essence it is much more than that. It is about how any state government of any persuasion can best address the needs of an incredibly diverse and multicultural state with enormous challenges of how remote communities can be supported. The blind ideology of royalties for regions that the National Party pursued and the tensions it built up with its Liberal colleagues in the government, who incidentally have all left the chamber —

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** Some of them have gone home.

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** Yes, some of them have gone home.

That just shows how much they take for royalties for regions. We know that if there should ever be a Liberal–National government in the future, the Liberal Party will not make the same mistake twice. It will have its hands firmly on the lever.

The way that royalties for regions was managed wreaked havoc on the budget. I do not need to say that. In 2013, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia called for changes to the royalties for regions program pointing out that while revenue going to the fund had been steadily rising, GST payments to WA had been falling

and it could see the looming threat to the state's fiscal position. The CCI could see that there was a train wreck coming and it called on the government of the day to do something about it. What did the then Leader of the National Party, Hon Brendon Grylls, say? He said —

“Until my last dying breath I will defend Royalties for Regions ...

It is no good defending royalties for regions when the state is going bankrupt.

**Mr R.S. Love** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Moore!

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** The Nationals WA had the opportunity to take corrective action —

**Mr R.S. Love** interjected.

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

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** The only opportunity it took, which it now denies, was to move all the structural arrangements through development commissions in the department from consolidated revenue into royalties for regions and then set a cap on royalties for regions. The Nationals WA started that process because it recognised in some small way that it was not going to be totally sustainable. Then, of course, recently, there was the Langoulant report. I want to quote ABC news. There were some very interesting comments on ABC news. One article states —

The Ray Finlayson Sporting Complex was cited as an example of waste in public spending, where good governance practices had broken down.

“A \$16-million project. Did we need it? Probably not,” City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder —

Local government, members —

chief executive John Walker told the inquiry.

“We had quality sporting fields already. But because there is a lot of money there, it had to be spent.”

That sums it up.

I want to go through another ABC news report. I am happy to table these if members would like to read them. The Langoulant inquiry started with a very good analysis of royalties for regions and how it ultimately helped create the fiscal conditions that threatened it. The grand bargain came out of political expediency, a grab for power by Hon Colin Barnett, who would sell anything to become Premier in 2008, and Brendon Grylls was right there with him.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** The article has a picture of Brendon Grylls. He does not look too happy.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Bunbury.

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** Then there is a comment about a shortcut to a shadow Treasury. I have spoken about the shadow Treasury in this house before. The article states —

Ideas for RfR projects came from all over—government agencies, local councils and other entities ...

Why would it not? There was \$1 billion up for grabs and the catch-cry was, “We don't quite know how to spend it”. The article continues —

But instead of going to Treasury, RfR applicants went straight to the Department of Regional Development to develop a business case for their projects.

It became a shadow Treasury. That is not good governance; that is the potential for mismanagement.

**Mr D.T. Redman** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Warren–Blackwood.

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** The article continues —

In some cases, no business case was submitted to Cabinet at all, because the proposed project sat within another program that had already been approved.

A number of projects had funding, with a whole suite of projects sitting underneath. We know that cabinet did deal with decisions under royalties for regions applications, and dealt with so many decisions that it started to skew cabinet business and bog cabinet down, overwhelming it with detailed material, right down to small grants. That is a very good way for poor decisions to be made, when so much information is put into cabinet that it is not possible to deal with them solidly. The article continues —

**Only one in 10 projects had solid business case**

...

### **Funds kept off-limits despite budget problems**

It could not be touched.

**Mr R.S. Love** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Moore!

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** I actually listened to the member for Moore in silence, except when he prodded me.

**Ms M.J. Davies:** No you didn't.

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** The Nationals do not like to hear this, but these are independent people.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Bunbury, you are inviting interjection.

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** The article continues with "Loss of AAA credit rating", which was due to a lack of budgetary flexibility. There was a lot of room for improvement. There is clearly a lot of commentary about the whole notion of how royalties for regions was managed between two parties that sometimes could not even share the cabinet room together.

I have been looking with interest at some of the Nationals WA agenda for the future. One that really caught my eye was the document "The Nationals target a building back better campaign for regional WA", with \$250 million allocated over five years, which equates to about \$50 million a year to support the 11 regional cities. That translates into about \$4.54 million a year per regional city. Regional cities would be duded because there is far more going into supporting infrastructure in our regional cities than \$4.54 million. It also highlights that the Nationals have learnt nothing about fiscal responsibility, because this reads like a general gift to the local regional capitals. "Here is \$4.54 million." There is no structure around it whatsoever.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** The other part of this campaign talks about batteries and power. There has been complete silence from the Liberal Party's colleagues about how it wants to expose Synergy to full market contestability to put it out for competition. What does that mean, Minister for Energy, for the uniform tariff policy?

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** It finishes.

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** It finishes. What would that mean for regional pricing for small businesses and households?

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** It means they would pay more than people in the metropolitan area.

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** How extraordinary that we have not heard from the Nationals on that issue. I bet they have not been speaking to country colleagues about that or spreading the issue around about what a terrible policy the Liberal Party intends to take to the next election, which, historically, has been proven time and again to be the undermining of the uniform tariff policy that has meant so much to regional Western Australia. Where do the Nationals stand on the uniform tariff policy? Do they support it?

**Mr R.S. Love:** We support the uniform tariff policy. Of course we do.

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** Have they told their Liberal colleagues that they support it?

**Ms M.J. Davies:** As we sit here, we are the National Party; this is something that you don't understand.

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** Yes, but who will the Nationals WA govern with? If it ever gets to govern, who will it govern with? The uniform tariff policy is a major issue.

I want to finish with a quote from Hon Wendy Duncan, who, members would recall, undertook the 2010 Duncan review. I want to return to development commissions, because I gave 20 years of my life to development commissions. This is a quote —

"At the moment, the commissions are a bit hamstrung, because they are answerable to the (Regional Development) Department and Minister ...

"Instead of having a bit more independence, and the ability to thump the table."

She said that in 2016. That, I think, says it all. When the Nationals WA come in here and tell us that we are emasculating the regional development commissions, that we have destroyed the structure of regional development, that we do not care about regional people, that we are mismanaging royalties for regions funds, I say to the Nationals that we have the state's fiscal structures back on track. The fiscal discipline is now there. We have put in a record contribution to regional WA, because we care about the whole of Western Australia and we recognise that the only way to build prosperity in either the metropolitan area or regional Western Australia is to take the whole of the state forward. That is how we do it. We do it with resilience, strategy and fiscal discipline and we do not do it with half-truths and innuendo.

**MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie–Preston — Minister for Sport and Recreation)** [6.15 pm]: I rise today to speak on this motion. I am astounded that anyone who could run a state broke in partnership would come back and have a go at the Labor Party about how and where we should spend our money. That would have to be the joke of the century. People have forgotten very quickly that when we came into government, the state was about \$40 billion in debt, yet here we have the same people saying what we should do with the money. The Labor Party has taken some very large steps, through difficult times as well, to make sure the money is spread evenly and put in the right spot. As was said briefly before, it was about how that money has been allocated through the development commissions and other areas. We must remember that a former minister, who is sitting on the other side, went out and sold one-third of the grain development area for around \$19 million. He sold some of the agriculture department. As a country person, it really rankled with me that he was out there saying how the government helps farmers and this is what it does, but to sell the grain breeding area for \$19 million was an absolute disgrace. Further, the same former minister withdrew \$20 million out of the forestry area on plantings and then collapsed the industry, the small coupes that were being grown on properties, and said, “You can have them, because we don’t want them anymore”. This is the same member who is supposedly sticking up for country areas.

It does rankle a bit when I sit here at times and listen to what is straight out political bulldust, to say the least, to try to get their names in the paper on the back of a reporter who reports for the *Kalgoorlie Miner*. The Nationals have used the *Kalgoorlie Miner* as evidence to stand up here today. It is absolute laziness to do it that way. While I am talking about Kalgoorlie, I have taken John Bowler, who the Nationals seem to have great faith in, to task many times about the way royalties for regions was distributed under the previous government. He said, “But we never got south, Mick. We were doing the north, and we had got the northern part and the central wheatbelt parts, then we would have done the south.” In other words, it was never going to them. That is what was said by the person whom the Nationals are holding in high esteem. Certainly, we have had that discussion with Mr Bowler many times. I am not sure whether he is a paid-up member of the Nationals, but he certainly leans that way.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms M.M. Quirk)**: Members! The peanut gallery over there can be quiet, please.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY**: That is fine, Madam Acting Speaker, just call him for what you like. He is on his third one, so if he wants to go out the door that is fine. It is not far from crib time.

**Mr R.S. Love**: Speak up. I can’t hear you.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY**: Do you want a lend of them? When I saw the member for Moore going like that, I thought he might want a lend of them. No, he does not.

**Mr R.S. Love**: I want to know what you’re saying.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY**: I was saying that John Bowler, who at the time was very closely associated with the member’s party, was saying, “We’ve done the midwest, we’ve done the north west and then we’re going to do the south west.” Unfortunately, they never got down our end. Some trinket money was being thrown around in the early days—there were singing toilets, plastic cows and all those rubbishy things. It was a like a cheap junk shop—the two buck shop. The former government was throwing money around the place. It was dropping it down anywhere and everywhere and it really got no benefit from it in those first four years. I think that most members of the National Party would agree that they did not get any benefit from the first four years. There was no strategic plan. It was just: get rid of the money; we have to spend it. That was a terrible thing to do, because it gave people the expectation that they could put out their hand and dollars would lob in it. That was not the case. When we came in, we had a more structured approach on how to go about things.

**Ms M.J. Davies** interjected.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY**: It is very, very structured and is working for country areas.

Several members interjected.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY**: Members opposite want to talk. I heard a noise from the back about schools. The National Party’s election promise was to upgrade Collie Senior High School. That was not done after two elections. But one party went out and, after three and a half years, the school has those upgrades—that is, the Labor Party. There was certainly no help from you guys whatsoever.

In the same sense we can talk about the blueprint. What a joke! It was all paper and all fluff and puff. There was no structure to go forward with.

**Mr D.T. Redman**: Who did it?

**Mr M.P. MURRAY**: I do not mind that. We have talked that out. We know that Brendon Grylls stood on stage in the centre of Collie and announced his blueprint. There was not one clap. People did not understand it. They did not understand him. It was the greatest thing that could have happened for my re-election. It was so great to see that people could not understand what the then Leader of the National Party was saying. He was wearing his jacket with

its elbow pads and his jeans. People did not understand what he was talking about. It was just amazing. He was trying to cover up. He just did not hit the spot. I was so happy. Honestly, it was so poorly presented it saved me spending \$2 000 or \$3 000 in ads the next week.

The blueprint had no outcomes. That is what Brendon wanted. Brendon went in and asked for blueprints for each of the areas. He came out with bits of paper that were absolutely worthless. But the people had a choice between the blueprint under the National Party or the Mick Murray plan for Collie–Preston. Which one did they take? Overwhelmingly, they took the Labor Party plan, and it is delivering. There are only about four small jobs in that plan left to do, and then every bit of that plan will have been achieved. That is something the National Party could never say it has done in any part of Western Australia. They have bits and pieces all over the place and no structured plan. We had a plan.

We have been criticised because Collie is getting money, but at the same time the member for Warren–Blackwood says that they probably deserve it. Which side is he on? Is he saying yes, no, or is he standing in the middle?

**Mr D.T. Redman:** I said they're going through a transition.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** He is obviously standing in the middle because he has a National Party candidate who is a reject from the Labor Party down there and he is trying to butter them up. We have a plan to change the town of Collie into something that will last into the future. We know—everyone in town knows—that coalmining will be phased out over the next 20 years. That is no joke. The phasing out is already happening with plants being shut down. The unions and the Minister for Energy sat down together to come up with a plan, and that is now being worked through. There is only one group that is trying to stop that. We saw that the other day with the new energy plan, which would disrupt that. The town of Collie would never recover from that. It would become a ghost town because there would be nothing to take the place of coal. The National Party has no plan for Collie. Members just need to go back to 2000 when Colin Barnett put out his gas pipeline plan. He was going to have a turbine on the end of gas pipelines, like an octopus. There was no plan for Collie. The Labor Party has supported Collie through thick and thin. Remember, two-thirds of the 3 000 people who live on the ridge live in the Bunbury region. When we use the word “Collie”, that is where the work is, but those people live on the coast. We are looking after that south west corner. If we do not do that, we will have problems down there, but we have had help from the Minister for Energy along those lines.

Further to that, members might want to come down and spend some money and have a look at the mural that is being built.

**Ms M.J. Davies:** Can you use the water? What's happening to the water in the Wellington Dam?

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** The Leader of the Nationals WA should just come down and have a look and she will enjoy it. She will need to bring her own pushbike and ride on all the trails that we have put out there as well. The National Party had no plan to develop the tourism industry in that central region. There is the Wellington Dam, and even though it is called Collie, there is Dardanup, Donnybrook, Boyanup and Harvey, and of course Eaton. It is going to be an area that people gravitate to. I will name-drop a bit here. I was at a function the other day and Graham Moss, the famous footballer, came up to me and said, “Mick, we've just spent a couple of weeks down in the Ferguson Valley and we went to Collie. What a lovely little town.” I said, “Yes. There's a good local member there. He's not going too bad.” He was telling me how Collie has been hidden and lost over time. Only one party put up the signs and made sure that people knew where Collie was. With help from the Minister for Tourism, we are really going forward in that area. On the back of the dam, the whole lot —

**Ms M.J. Davies** interjected.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** You can make as much noise as you like, Leader of the National Party, but you have not done one thing for the region.

**Ms M.J. Davies** interjected.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Yes, at one time we got a skate park.

**Ms M.J. Davies:** Skate park? We completely revitalised your main street.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Revitalised? But you never had any plans for jobs. It is no good having a pretty face and nothing underneath it.

**Ms M.J. Davies** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** I call you to order for the second time, Leader of the Nationals WA.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Structure is needed to hold up the whole town and region. The National Party does not have structure in its plan.

Let us go back further to the amount of roadworks that have been needed. It took an age to get the dangerous Coalfields Highway done. I admit that it was done under a Liberal–National government but, by gee, there were

faces of Colin Barnett all the way up and down that highway. Every day I was in the press to keep on the pressure until we finally got it, which then stopped a lot of accidents. I think that in one year, five people were killed on that road.

Again, it has to be a targeted approach. I am not sure whether members have been through Donnybrook lately. The political differences between the shire president and me are huge. He is a card-carrying Liberal, but we have worked bloody hard—I mean hard—to make sure that Donnybrook got its share. It did not get anything under royalties for regions. Point to one thing in Donnybrook that was paid for by royalties for regions? There has not been one thing. When I go to Donnybrook now, I get so many pats on the back. Generally, it would be a whack in the ear because we play footy there and someone would be trying to square it up. But I can tell members that the people of Donnybrook are so pleased with the Labor government. When Mark McGowan came down for a cabinet meeting, people were queued up in the street. People who I know are blue-ribbon Liberals were queued up in the street asking for a photo with Mark. I only wish I had charged them 10 bucks, because it would have paid for my next campaign. So many people were there. Honestly, the people of Donnybrook were left behind and they had to pull out. Boyanup was left behind and they had to pull out. Dardanup was left behind because the southern drift did not come down under the Nationals plan. That comes from Mr Bowler himself, who I am sure sits in a lot of meetings with the Nationals.

If we look at it from that point of view, Collie is going well. The region is going well. We are working closely with Bunbury to make sure about that. Then there is Harvey over on the other side. We have a plan not for particular towns but for the region. The former government did nothing with the sporting funding. When it moved the sports funding over to royalties for regions, it was double dipping. It was pushing that out there and the sports funding went down. Yes, former minister, sports funding went down and royalties for regions funding went up. Members of the Nationals WA were not being totally honest with the public. They were using the figures to justify the answer.

I am getting the wind-up. I can tell members that the one thing we in this house will never walk away from is fiscal responsibility. It is taxpayers' money; it is not the National Party's money. It should be spent fairly and across the state, not just targeted at one area.

**MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Mines and Petroleum)** [6.25 pm]: I am very pleased to join this debate. I want to start by again thanking the member for Moore. The member for Moore has performed a great service for the people of Western Australia. Even though he gave notice of a motion to disallow the fracking regulations in Western Australia, he did not proceed with that motion. He not only did not proceed with it, but also never asked for it to be debated in the house. I note that the member for Moore, on behalf of the National Party, issued a media release —

**Mr R.S. Love** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Moore, just exercise some impulse control.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** He issued a media release saying that he was going to move to disallow those regulations. He implied to his community that he was going to take action to disallow those regulations. I was very concerned with that, because that would have completely undermined the careful process that the government had gone through with the scientific investigation into fracking and then its response to that. Of course, it also would have upset industry in this state.

I contacted the federal Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia at the time, who of course was a member of the National Party, and I said, "How is this being allowed to happen? Why is the National Party running around Australia calling for the exploitation of unconventional gas?" In fact, the federal minister at the time was also criticising me in the media for being too cautious about unconventional gas. I was a bit concerned. It was a bit confusing, because the member for Moore put out a media release through the National Party that said that he was going to move to disallow fracking in Western Australia, while the federal minister was criticising me for being too cautious. I rang the federal minister and said, "What is happening here?" He said to me that he would find out. He rang me back a couple of days later and said, "Don't worry about it; it's just politicking by some local member. It's not the National Party's position and they're not going to proceed with it." That is what I was told by the federal National Party minister.

I was concerned. I checked with the Clerk about how the motion would be dealt with, because obviously it was upsetting the government's plan to have the disallowance motion on the books. I discovered that there was nothing the government could do about it; we had to wait until that period had expired. I appreciated that advice from the Clerk. Even though I had been assured by the federal minister that it was just local politicking, I was concerned that the federal minister was wrong. I am very pleased that what I was assured by the federal minister was, in fact, true. It was nothing more than just local politicking and there was never any intention to move to disallow those fracking regulations.

I must say on behalf of the people of the seat of Moore that I am disappointed in that, because I think a member should say the same thing to their community as they say in this place. I do not think it is right that a member says

one thing to their community and, in fact, tables petitions calling for the end of fracking in Western Australia, but then has no intention of following through on that. As I say, I had already been assured by the National Party's leadership that that was just local politicking. I want to thank the member for Moore for the fact that he never had any intention of proceeding with that disallowance motion. It was being done only so he could put out a media release and tell his constituents that he was on their side, even though he never had any intention of doing what he said he was going to do. It is good for the government that the member for Moore was not telling the truth to his constituents—I am not saying that he was lying; I am just saying that he was not telling the truth—because that means that the government's careful management of fracking has been allowed to continue. I make it clear that there is no expectation —

**Mr R.S. Love** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** I call you to order for the second time, member for Moore.

**Mr R.S. Love** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Moore, that is three.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** There is no expectation for any fracking to take place in the midwest, because there is no belief that there is any unconventional gas in that province.

*Point of Order*

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** This is a motion about the management of the royalties for regions program. It is not about fracking. Furthermore, the Minister for Mines and Petroleum is misleading the house. He knows full well that fracking has occurred in the midwest and that there are exploration licences that have a program of works that includes exploration for unconventional gas. He is misleading the house.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms M.M. Quirk):** Member, there is no point of order. The minister is speaking to a broad motion about the management of royalties for regions in the way he sees fit.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** Indeed, onshore gas royalties are covered by the royalties for regions legislation that the government has not amended. The royalties we are going to receive from the gas activity in the midwest are exactly part of this debate. It also goes to the heart of the credibility of the embarrassing speech given by the member for Moore in this debate, in which he tried to attack the high-quality member for Pilbara, a man of great integrity who has great support in his community. Let us not forget how the member for Pilbara came to this Parliament. He defeated Hon Brendon Grylls, whom the five National Party members who spoke in today's debate credit with the invention of royalties for regions. Of course, it was actually Wendy Duncan who came up with the plan for royalties for regions, but of course it was always Brendon Grylls who was given the credit. That was one of the reasons that Wendy Duncan became so concerned about what was happening, and it led to her decision not to endorse the National Party's candidate in Kalgoorlie at the 2017 election, remembering that she was the sitting member for Kalgoorlie at the time. Let us not rewrite history in this place. It reminds me of Hon Norman Moore's comment to members of the Liberal Party. He said, "Never be in a photo with Hon Brendon Grylls because you'll end up in the royal commission." That is what he used to tell Liberals. That is what happens here.

**Ms M.J. Davies:** It's grubby.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** Grubby! The Leader of the Nationals WA talks about grubs. I know she was not in the chamber at the time as she was on urgent parliamentary business—I accept that; that is not a criticism—but she should read the disgraceful contribution from the member for Moore, who says things to his community and acts differently. He says one thing to his community and acts differently in Parliament. He says one thing to his community, but does it only because he thinks it is political. That is what he thinks.

**Ms M.J. Davies:** He is very well supported in his electorate and a man of great integrity. I will not accept criticism from you on that front.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** I am going to give a criticism. I am not taking any interjections, Acting Speaker.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members, do you note that?

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** I just make the point that the member for Moore said something to his community for the purposes of politicking and I was told that by the National Party. That was not my invention; that is what I was assured by the National Party. Another member in this building—I will not name the person—came up to me at the bar and talked about stuff, but I will not go through those details. I know exactly what happened.

I want to get on to another part of the management of royalties for regions. I remind people of question on notice 6175 of 1 November 2011. I asked this question of the then Minister for Regional Development —

I refer to the answers provided by the Minister on 20 September 2011 —

I then listed a whole series of questions that I had asked —

- (a) what area has been cropped for rice production in the Ord region in 2011;
- (b) how much rice was harvested this year;
- (c) has the Minister's targeted production of 10 000 tons for 2011 been achieved, and if it has not been achieved, what is the reason for the Minister's failure to reach his production target;
- (d) is this productivity above the 2010 yield of 6 tons per hectare;
- (e) what high-value niche marketing opportunities through the Sunrice connections, if any, was this rice sold into;
- (f) can the Minister advise where the rice has and will be processed;
- (g) if the rice is to be processed overseas, has and will the rice be re-imported to Australia; and
- (h) if the rice is to be processed overseas and then re-imported to Australia, what quarantine arrangements will be required by Australian authorities?

The reason I asked those questions is that those of us who were in the chamber at the time will remember Hon Brendon Grylls throwing bags of rice around the chamber. That was in 2010. He said that by 2011, there would be 10 000 tonnes of rice up there, and it was on the way to 100 000 tonnes. What he did not tell anybody was that the rice that had been grown was given away for free and sent to Papua New Guinea. The reason it was sent to Papua New Guinea is that it could not be milled in Western Australia. The only mill was in New South Wales, and the cost of trucking the rice from the Kimberley to New South Wales was, of course, prohibitive, so it was boxed up and sent to New Guinea to be processed and given away for free because it was not commercially viable.

What happened the next year? I knew this when I asked that question. In 2010, the rice had been affected by rust, or some other parasite. In 2011, it had been eaten by some birds that come through the north of Australia as part of their annual migration. I knew that there would be no harvest, because the rice had been eaten in the field by birds. The answer from Hon Brendon Grylls was —

The Member is referred to the response provided to Question on Notice ...

He said that the rice harvest had not happened. That is what his previous answer had been. I had asked previously a very similar question. He said the rice had not been harvested yet. The reason the rice was not harvested is that it had been eaten. That is why no rice is grown in the Ord today.

The whole point is that the National Party spent \$300 million to create a crop of 100 000 tonnes of rice. I am not saying that is what the intention was. Hon Brendon Grylls said that the purpose of the Ord scheme was to grow 100 000 tonnes of rice. The question is: did that succeed? It is not a question of whether I think it succeeded. The question is: did the National Party think it succeeded? The answer is no. The National Party said it was about growing rice crops. No rice has ever been grown on the Ord, because rice is not a crop that can be grown there. One year it was rust, or some other parasite; the following year, it was birds. It is not a surprise. I do not understand why the National Party ever thought that rice could be grown in the Kimberley. Rice had been grown in the Kimberley in the 1960s, and guess what happened? Exactly the same thing happened in the 1960s. I do not get why the National Party thought —

**Ms M.J. Davies** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members! The minister has indicated that he is not accepting interjections.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** This is how stupid the National Party is. It said that \$300 million was being spent to create 100 000 tonnes of annual rice production. It was not a project. It was not a research and development opportunity. It was supposed to produce an economic return. The National Party compares that failure with the challenges around a research and development project that was designed to create new knowledge.

**Ms M.J. Davies** interjected.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** For crying out loud! The member for Central Wheatbelt needs to start reading things. She should not come in here and just flap her gums around. She should read a few things. I know that she has some problems in the National Party today. The problem is the member for North West Central. He used to be our problem. He is now the National Party's problem. He used to stack branches in the Labor Party. He now stacks branches in the National Party. These are the things that happen all the time.

**Ms M.J. Davies** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Leader of the National Party, I call you to order for the third time.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** The National Party invested \$300 million in that project to grow 100 000 tonnes of rice. Not one gram of rice is being grown there. That is the problem.

**Mr D.T. Redman** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Warren–Blackwood! If you cannot control yourself, leave the chamber.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** Members of the National Party thought that was a good idea. Their aim was to grow 100 000 tonnes of rice. That was their ambition. That is not what I said should be grown there. That is what the National Party said. It said this would be a food bowl.

I want to make another point. That 100 000 tonnes of rice is a fraction of the total rice grown in Australia. Australia is a minor country in the growing of rice. This is the opportunity cost that was missed here. This is why we talk about properly thinking through what we are doing. Imagine that instead of spending that \$300 million on not growing rice in the Kimberley—because that is what happened—that money had been spent on improving productivity in the wheatbelt. Imagine if that had been done. One of the great challenges for regional Western Australia is the relative decline in productivity in the wheatbelt compared with countries that are challenging us in broad-range grain harvesting. Look at the statistics of the grains that are coming out of the Ukraine and Russia. Within five to 10 years, Western Australia's grain industry will be deeply challenged. The National Party wasted \$300 million in the Ord. It did not get what it said that project would do.

The National Party now talks about Kimberley Agricultural Investment. Let me make it clear. The National Party gave that land away for free. It spent \$300 million on that land, and it then gave it away for free. This was not unexpected. We can see from all the discussions about the Ord scheme going back to the 1940s that this challenge has always existed. This was not unexpected. It was not as though we said, "Oh, my gosh! I did not realise that." That is what has happened previously. The growing of rice in the Ord was tried in the 1960s. The National Party called that \$300 million expenditure Ord stage 2. It was not. It was Ord stage 3. The original scheme was invented in the 1940s and implemented in the 1950s. Ord stage 2 was done in the 1960s, when the commonwealth government expanded the scheme by paying for the dam wall to be raised. What the National Party did was Ord stage 3. It called it Ord stage 2, because otherwise it would have had to admit that it had not delivered what it was said to deliver.

The National Party said it was about Aboriginal employment. The best we could understand from the answers to our questions on notice is that 11 jobs were created for Aboriginal people during construction. There were no ongoing jobs for Aboriginal people. Imagine if that \$300 million had been put into remote Aboriginal communities. The Minister for Water, and I as the Minister for Energy, are now trying fix the problems in those remote Aboriginal communities that were abandoned by the federal Liberal–National government and that we inherited from the former government. Instead, the National Party spent that money on not growing rice in the Kimberley. The National Party said it was about growing 100 000 tonnes of rice. Not one gram of rice is being grown there. I do not get what the National Party does not like about value for money. Why is value for money a bad outcome?

I want to also remind people about the Western Australian Local Government Association report that was published in 1998 about assistance to local governments. I forget the exact name of the report; it was a sustainability report. One of the recommendations in that report was that local governments should not be given grants, because they would then have to fund the upkeep of the infrastructure. Guess what royalties for regions did? It paid grants to local governments, and those local governments then had to pick up the ongoing depreciation costs. The idea is that depreciation is free. It is not. We have to replace capital over time. We need only look at the accounts of any organisation, including local governments. They show the depreciation costs, as do we here in Western Australia at the state government level. What is the ongoing cost of running that infrastructure? We have to make sure that those costs are also looked after. That is about sustainability, not providing a one-off grant.

I do not get why the Nationals WA think that value for money is a bad thing. I do not understand that. I just do not get it. We have spent every cent of royalties for regions that we are required to in the regions. In addition, we have allocated other moneys. For example, 80 per cent of the emergency services levy is raised in Perth and 80 per cent of it is spent in the regions. It is not just royalties for regions that this government is supporting in regional Western Australia. We have a comprehensive program, and that is what annoys the Nationals. We do not brand it in National Party colours with its brand name. We are not doing that. We represent every Western Australian, and we are proud of that. I am proud to stand with the member for Pilbara because he is an outstanding member of Parliament. I will still put the \$50 on the table if the Leader of the Nationals wants to take the bet.

**MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Tourism)** [6.50 pm]: It is always a pleasure to follow the Minister for Mines and Petroleum. He has reminded me so many times that when we were in opposition, we were lamenting that we were compelled to sit on the other side of the chamber and scratch our heads about what was going on in the government. There were two governments with two budgets, one of which was controlled by some incredibly irresponsible people who sought to do little else other than raise their profile and brand things. That was the Minister for Mines and Petroleum's last observation about what is really troubling the Nationals WA right now. It is upset that its bumper stickers are not all over the regions claiming responsibility for government spending of taxpayers' money across the regions. That is what has upset the National Party members.

In the time remaining, I will reflect on the few references to blueprints that have been made during the course of this debate. I know that the National Party and the member for Bunbury referred to regional development commission blueprints. Some might sceptically say that they were devised to keep a bunch of people busy consulting with each

other and talking about things that might or might not come to fruition under the leadership of the National Party. Nevertheless, it kept people assured that they were being consulted. That is not a criticism of the people involved or necessarily of the objectives that were identified as being important for their communities, but it is an observation that I would make about the way the National Party operated when in government. A lot of what it did was for show. Money was spent on children's T-shirts and balloons, banners and giveaways at shows in the regions just to elevate the brand that, essentially, had no substance behind it when it was first announced. I know that is the case because I was there when it happened. It was an idea for an election campaign—nothing more—scratched out on the back of a cigarette packet in the lead-up to the 2008 election.

The National Party and its then partner, the Liberal Party, found themselves confronted with having to provide some substance to that brand. One of the things the Nationals did, which the Leader of the Nationals WA incredibly referred to as a good idea, was to create the country local government fund. The member for Bunbury was working with the development commission at the time. I can tell those members who were not here that it was a fund of \$150 million with zero probity. There were no objectives, there was no reporting and no methodology around the distribution of the funds. When we asked questions about it in Parliament and repeatedly asked during estimates for an explanation by the then Leader of the National Party about what happened to that money, he was incapable of reporting what had happened to it. In fact, it took him a couple of years to answer our questions. By the second year, he responded to our questioning in Parliament in our pursuit of that matter and, ultimately, the National Party created a structure around it before the party let it go.

That was disappointing for some of the people who had spent a lot of time creating that structure. I think that the National Party let go of the fund after it realised it was not the best use of money to fly around the state and kick money out the back of the plane because it had created a cargo cult mentality in local governments. I am not surprised that a journalist sitting in Kalgoorlie could ring local governments across Western Australia and find people who were disgruntled that they could no longer walk to the front of the local government office and look up to the skies in the hope that the green and yellow plane would fly past with the back ramp open and see a big bundle of money being parachuted out of it. I am not surprised that some people are disappointed that that is not the case anymore. We now have probity and structure and taxpayers' money is being used in an efficient way.

We have seen the biggest spend on regional roads in the history of Western Australia. The safety of Western Australians in the regions is being addressed for the very first time by a Labor government, not by the Nationals or the Liberal Party, which demonstrated that they cared nought about the fact that people in the wheatbelt were three times as likely to die in a car crash than people in the metropolitan area. They did nothing about that. The Western Australian Labor Party is addressing that matter. We are spending more money than ever before on road safety in the regions in an efficient way, because that is what is required. We are spending more money on health in the regions without having to brand it as something that the National Party has delivered. I know that upsets the National Party members.

Since the COVID restrictions were lifted, there has been one incredible benefit as a consequence of Western Australians confronting COVID. I sense it when I go around the regions. I see it and hear it when I talk to hundreds of small businesses in the regions and when I speak to local governments, citizens and businesses in the regions. Western Australians, like everyone in the world, confronted this global pandemic, and it caused them to come together. They were willing to sacrifice their own self-interests on behalf of a good outcome for the state. That has been a great outcome, and it has continued. In the regions, people are wandering out yonder. That is the most successful intrastate travel campaign ever launched in Western Australia. It has seen Western Australians holidaying out in the regions like never before. They are doing it not just for a holiday; they are actively seeking out an opportunity to support their fellow Western Australians, and that is a good thing.

Getting back to the reference to blueprints, as we approach the election, it is sad to see the Nationals returning to its standard blueprint for politicking. The Nationals pretends that it is an independent party and will somehow magically get into office independently of the Liberal Party. Everyone in Western Australia knows that is not true. Everyone knows that the only way the Nationals will form government is with the Western Australian Liberal Party, but they also know that the Nationals seek to drive a wedge between metropolitan Western Australians and those who live in the regions. The Nationals political blueprint is to create division. It is very sad. It is not the Liberals doing that. To the extent that it even bothers with the regions, it does not do that. The National Party's only plan is to suggest to regional Western Australians that they are being dudded by people in the city who do not care about them, for some reason, despite the fact that Western Australians who live in the city are subsidizing the power, the water and the air travel for those who live in the regions. For eight and a half years, people on the other side of the chamber ignored the fact that airfares were going crazy in the regions. People in regional towns and cities were confronted with ridiculous prices to travel just to visit their family in Perth or to seek medical attention or educational opportunities. They were confronted with outrageous airfare prices. The only party that responded to that challenge was the WA Labor Party. In opposition, we promised to conduct an inquiry.

We did that the moment we got in and since then regional Western Australians right across the state have benefited from more affordable flights in multiple destinations, many of which are tourism destinations. That has resulted in further job opportunities and growth in business. As I travel the state, I see Western Australians from the country

and the city who recognise that they are all in it together. It is disgraceful and disappointing that the National Party is trying to drive a wedge between them, because that is one of the great outcomes of this achievement through this COVID period; all Western Australians are working together and there is a sense of camaraderie and community that I have not witnessed before. It is very sad that the Western Australian National Party returned to its standard blueprint, which is to suggest to people in the country that the people in the city are somehow trying to rip them off. The number of people I have seen going to the regions to take the opportunity to have a holiday, yes, but also to support small business, tourism and accommodation is incredible.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

**ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AMENDMENT BILL 2020**

*Returned*

Bill returned from the Council with amendments.

*House adjourned at 7.01 pm*

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**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Questions and answers are as supplied to Hansard.

**COMMUNITY SERVICES — SERVICE AGREEMENTS****6452. Mr A. Krsticevic to the Minister for Community Services:**

I refer to the Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy (“Policy”) which was released in 2018 and recommends that service agreements are for a minimum five year term (exclusive of extension options) and ask:

- (a) how many new Community Service Organisation service agreements have been entered into since the Policy was implemented;
- (b) of those agreements referred to in (a) how many were:
  - (i) one year or less (exclusive of extension options);
  - (ii) one to two years (exclusive of extension options);
  - (iii) two to three years (exclusive of extension options);
  - (iv) three to four years (exclusive of extension options);
  - (v) four to five years (exclusive of extension options); and
  - (vi) five years or more (exclusive of extension options);
- (c) how many existing Community Service Organisation service agreements have been granted extensions, since the Policy was implemented; and
- (d) of those agreements referred to in (c) how many were:
  - (i) one year or less (exclusive of further extension options);
  - (ii) one to two years (exclusive of further extension options);
  - (iii) two to three years (exclusive of further extension options);
  - (iv) three to four years (exclusive of further extension options);
  - (v) four to five years (exclusive of further extension options); and
  - (vi) five years or more (exclusive of further extension options)?

**Ms S.F. McGurk replied:**

Refer to LA QON 6453.

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