



Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION
2024

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Thursday, 9 May 2024

Legislative Council

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THE PRESIDENT (Hon Alanna Clohesy) took the chair at 10.00 am, read prayers and acknowledged country.

DISALLOWANCE MOTIONS

Notice of Motion

1. Shire of Williams Cats Local Law 2024.
2. Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale Cat Local Law 2023.

Notices of motion given by **Hon Lorna Harper**.

HOUSING — FEDERAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Motion

HON BEN DAWKINS (South West) [10.03 am] — without notice: I move —

That the Legislative Council agrees that the current housing emergency is affecting Western Australians from all backgrounds, including people who arrived in Western Australia today, and calls on the federal government to immediately reduce immigration numbers and ban foreign house purchases to ensure families who already live in Western Australia do not have to live in tents and cars.

The last time I stood here and talked about immigration and the effect it is having on our current housing crisis, I was called a racist by Hon Pierre Yang. I ask people like Hon Pierre Yang to think about the fact that I speak for a large group of One Nation supporters—people who want solutions for ordinary Western Australians. When I am called a racist, the electors I speak for are being insulted. I would have thought that would be political suicide because it strengthens my resolve and empowers me, and it strengthens support for One Nation and for me, standing here and telling the truth, as I am elected to do.

We had a discussion on aspects of this topic yesterday and it is about mathematics. It is about the number of people coming in and the number of houses that we can build. This is similar subject matter, one might say. Yesterday I referred to a *West Australian* article of 7 May, an opinion piece by Hon Steve Martin. He stated —

... Labor is bringing in more people to this country than ever before, who need someone to live ...

That is pretty simple; it is mathematics. Elsewhere in that article by Hon Steve Martin he refers to some statistics: net migration into Australia of 548 000 people in 2023, and 170 000 new dwellings constructed in that year. Hon Dr Brad Pettitt in his motion yesterday also referred to mathematics, which is what I am referring to today. That is why I suppose it was a great disappointment for all of us yesterday that we could not collaborate more effectively, because even Hon Dr Brad Pettitt said it was a mathematical problem to some extent. We are talking about other contributing factors to our housing crisis, but excessive migration is an unavoidable and undeniable contributor.

One Nation can win enough lower house seats to form government, no problem. But if that does not happen, I think the people of Western Australia could live with Hon Steve Martin as Minister for Housing. They literally cannot live with Hon John Carey as Minister for Housing because they have nowhere to live under the present housing minister. The reality is that families and kids are living in cars and tents because they cannot afford rentals. Rentals have increased almost 100 per cent for some people since WA Labor took power. A short time ago we were talking about \$350 to \$400 per week; now we are talking about \$750 to \$800 per week for renters. I acknowledge that Hon Dr Brad Pettitt's motion yesterday was largely about renters.

A recent report into rental affordability found that the most vulnerable in our community have no hope of finding a rental any time soon. Average house prices are obviously increasing. It is okay if you have a house, but if you do not, you are being locked out of that market. If a WA family wants to own their own home, they have to commit to mortgages that effectively enslave them to the big banks for life. I see things quite clearly. What is, in effect, happening here is that Labor is redistributing wealth from its supposed support base to the big banks and the big end of town. It is effectively cannibalising its own supposed supporters—working families.

So why is it that in Australia, and in Western Australia in particular, there is a situation in which we do not have enough houses for the people who are here right now? It is not a land shortage; I think our population turns out to be something like one person per square kilometre, so it is government mismanagement. Let us not avoid that issue. Obviously, it is also the management of immigration. We can do two things immediately that are designed to reduce demand to reduce pressure on our housing market. Firstly, as I said, we can reduce or even pause immigration so we can catch up and build houses for those who are already here. We can also ban foreign purchases of houses, like New Zealand and Canada have already done. This may result in some short-term cost; however, there will be a long-term gain. The major parties are not willing to do what is needed. They would rather kick the can down the road, but in this case, the can is WA families who are being kicked by WA Labor.

Immigration, of course, can be a good thing when we import people we need and want, but the current reality is that we are letting in volumes of people simply for the sake of letting in volumes of people to prop up the economy. Perhaps honourable members have been watching Pauline Hanson's *Please Explain* cartoons.

Hon Darren West: No, we haven't.

Hon BEN DAWKINS: Hon Darren West might say that he has never seen it, but he is probably just denying that he has watched it. It is a very popular cartoon series. The most recent Pauline Hanson *Please Explain* cartoon is about this specific fact. It is about the major parties' addiction to immigration. It explains how immigration is out of control. Everyone knows it is out of control and hurting Australians, but the major parties are more interested in themselves than in making tough decisions. Reducing immigration will have an impact on house prices and growth, but these short-term impacts would be outweighed by the long-term negative impacts of current uncontrolled migration. It is basic maths. We need to reduce immigration; however, howls of "racism!" from Labor tend to follow. The sad truth is that the major parties have only one suggestion, which is more of the same. It is like the person who is stuck in the mud and trying to dig out their legs with their arms. The simple fact is that we need to reduce demand to allow supply to catch up, which is what we were talking about yesterday, I thought, until debate got off track.

One Nation has contributed to debate on this issue. If we look back at 2017 to 2021, Hon Colin Tincknell then drew attention to the developing housing emergency. WA Labor can hardly say that the issue has crept up on it. In the term of Parliament that commenced in 2017, before COVID happened, One Nation also foreshadowed how public housing was being decimated. At the time, One Nation also suggested the housing first model, which was ultimately adopted; however, the government seems to have forgotten that the emphasis is on "housing" in that solution and is really only adopting it by name. The housing situation in WA has become progressively worse, and that started long before COVID, so COVID cannot be used as a valid excuse in this instance.

The Minister for Housing does not even know how many families are living in cars and tents and does not seem to care. The Treasurer refers to the situation of a family living in a tent with a newborn as "concerning". I think that is totally unacceptable, and we should all agree with that if we care. In an emergency like this, people could be housed at the huge facility in Bullsbrook, but the WA government appears not to have even inquired about the use of this facility and, therefore, appears not to care. Let us reflect. The government thinks that living in a tent or a car with a newborn during winter is more appropriate than in an empty, unused, state-of-the-art residential facility.

This is the result of an even more cynical and outrageous thing that the Labor government inflicted on Western Australians, which was the austerity measures under McGowan that started in 2017.

Point of Order

Hon PIERRE YANG: The member making a speech should refer to the former Premier by his correct title.

The PRESIDENT: Hon Pierre Yang is referring to the standing order that requires members to address all members and sovereigns by their correct titles. That includes former members, so I would encourage the honourable member to have that in mind when he is making his address.

Debate Resumed

Hon BEN DAWKINS: Thank you, President. Hon Pierre Yang is the gift that keeps on giving. People have watched his childish interruptions to my speeches before.

The PRESIDENT: Order! A point of order is not debatable, and so, although I have not called a point of order, I would encourage you to focus on the content of your contribution.

Hon BEN DAWKINS: There were austerity measures even when there were big surpluses during the term of government commencing in 2017. The Labor government paid down some amount of debt during that time. I think debt was up to \$33.2 billion, but last year it was down to \$27.9 billion, but it is somewhat underwhelming, considering the large surpluses and, at the same time, the cost to WA families. What austerity measures am I talking about during this time? I am saying that we had a degraded police force, a degraded health system, a dysfunctional education system, real wages going backwards, a disturbingly under-resourced child protection system and, of course, public housing waiting lists that were a source of depression for many. I am not sure that the people of Western Australia can trust either of the major parties on immigration, considering their track records.

Of course, the suggestion to reduce immigration and ban foreign purchases of houses is a commonwealth government issue. We know that it is in charge of these things; however, the WA Labor Party, the WA Liberal Party and the Nationals WA are not advocating for these things with their federal colleagues as much as they could be. In reality, they are complicit and responsible for our current housing emergency. On the other hand, I can say that my federal One Nation colleagues are advocating strongly and voting accordingly. Really, we should all be passionate about reducing immigration—as the major parties were when it came to trying to secure a fairer share of the GST. It is that big an issue federally. We know that it is not impossible to advocate and lobby our federal counterparts, and that is what I am referring to today. Hopefully, I do not think members can dismiss my motion based on the fact that it is a federal issue.

Each member of the major parties in this place should be ashamed that kids are living in tents and cars. We are one of the wealthiest jurisdictions in the world. Every day that they do not demand from their commonwealth colleagues that immigration be reduced and foreign purchases of houses be banned is another day that they condemn a Western Australian child to disadvantage for the rest of their life. I see it. I have two teenage children, and I know people who are struggling to get a house deposit together now; they are younger people who would not have struggled in previous years or previous generations. I quite clearly see it as WA Labor redistributing wealth from the younger generation—I include Hon Wilson Tucker in that because I know he is renting and struggling at the moment—to Labor’s wealthy donors, baby boomers, landlords, property developers and the banks. I include property developers who are donors to the Labor Party, like Nigel Satterley. One Nation is the only party that seems to care, and more and more Australians are coming to the same conclusion.

HON STEVE MARTIN (Agricultural) [10.19 am]: I feel like I am seeking a right of reply after the contribution from the mover of the motion, Hon Ben Dawkins. I wish to make a brief contribution personally as well as on behalf of the Liberal and National Parties. We have just heard apparently from a Pauline Hanson’s One Nation representative in this place. Members opposite obviously have to be careful who they preselect. It has been an interesting pathway. We now have Hon Ben Dawkins espousing quite clearly a One Nation view of the world. I want to make it very clear that I stand nowhere near the One Nation leader’s well-known views on migration. You write one mild-mannered opinion piece in *The West Australian*! I think it is a good point: politicians need to be careful when we talk about migration for obvious reasons. I will get to some of that. The point I was making in the article is that the two policies at the moment do not align; the federal government’s immigration and housing policies and the state housing policy simply do not add up. Too many people are coming in at the moment for our capacity to build enough homes. That is obvious. The Minister for Housing, John Carey, will know that very clearly. If the federal government is honest, it will realise—probably a little late—that its migration numbers have added fuel to a very, very severe housing crisis.

As I said, we need to be careful. I made a social media post about the article I wrote in *The West Australian* in which I told Rita Saffioti to get on the phone to Canberra and say, “Well, we’ve got a problem here.” As members can imagine, if we post on social media, some of the responses are interesting. Even Hon Ben Dawkins this morning said that we should pause immigration, and that is a polite version of some of the stuff that has appeared on my social media page. I am a supporter of a migration program for this country. I mean, how could we not be in Australia, particularly in Western Australia? I am the grandson of a person who migrated here 100 years ago. There are members of this place who were born in other parts of the world. Obviously, we support migration, and we desperately need more people in Western Australia. We saw what a pause in migration looked like quite recently with the COVID pandemic. Then we saw the flow-on effects from a pause in migration when we could not find a staff member absolutely anywhere. Our unemployment rate is still very, very low. We need more people in here. The point, I think, that Hon Ben Dawkins was perhaps attempting to make was that we need a different mix in the skilled migration area, particularly in construction. If we are having a hard time building enough homes, and the mix in the visa allocation does not bring in enough skilled tradies, we have a problem. I agree entirely that that clearly needs to be looked at.

I want to move quickly to banning overseas investment in property. If members had been paying attention and are students of Western Australian history, they will know that we need overseas capital in this state. We always have done and we will continue to do so. Whether it is in mining, farming, horticulture or housing, we desperately need overseas capital. In the apartment space, new builds have pretty much stopped—flatlined. One way that developers of apartments get those projects off the ground is pre-sales, and if there is a component of overseas money in that, that certainly helps with what is, at the moment, a very, very difficult place to get apartments built. I think banning overseas investment in our property sector would be a dreadful mistake. There is a foreign buyer surcharge, which I guess was designed to slow that investment, but we need capital and we will continue to need capital, particularly in the apartment space. If we are to get anywhere near meeting our density targets, we will need apartments in this city and this state and overseas capital can help with that. The good thing about overseas investment in things such as farming land, of which I have some experience, and property is that people cannot take it away. The farming land stays in Western Australia, obviously. If the capital comes in, it builds the economy. Again, with houses, people cannot take them away. If we add to the housing stock in Western Australia, it stays here forever. That is a good thing.

We had the opportunity yesterday to talk about housing and I want to make a few more remarks on housing, which is the broader topic of Hon Ben Dawkins’ motion. There was an interesting article in this morning’s *The West Australian* by Kim Macdonald, the property writer at *The West*, who is a very good journalist. She does a power of work in that organisation on all aspects of property. Her take this morning compared where we are now with what happened postwar when the states and commonwealth jumped in and basically spent a lot of money. At one stage, according to the article of this morning, an extraordinary percentage of new homes were being built by the government in Western Australia. That is obviously unachievable these days. It states that 41 per cent of all residences built in WA between 1945 and 1956 were built by the state government. I think that the state could do things quicker and more nimbly in those days in a slightly different regulatory environment. That would be difficult to do now, and we could not afford to do it now, to be honest.

It is interesting because at a similar time to when that was happening, private ownership of homes in this country was still going up. We think that home ownership has been at a high level in Australia forever. In fact, in the 1940s it was much lower than it is today and in 1947, 53 per cent of homes were privately owned. At the same time as that investment in state housing was made, the rate of private ownership of homes in Australia steadily rose, and by 1966 it was 71.4 per cent. That sort of plateaued for the next 20 or 30 years. It has gradually come down to the mid-60s, but it is still much, much higher than it was in the 1940s. A key plank of the Liberal Party's housing policy is that Australians should have a pathway to home ownership.

There is never a bad time for a Robert Menzies quote. In 1953, Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies said —

This Government, therefore, believes in home ownership. It is opposed to governments, either Federal or State, becoming, by degrees, universal landlords. It does not believe that that is a function of governments.

We can see by those numbers that in the postwar period there was less than 50 per cent private home ownership, but it went all the way up to 71 per cent in 1966 under the Liberal leadership in Canberra. I think that is when it peaked. That number has declined slightly, but a strong majority of Australians still own their own properties, and long may that continue to be the case.

I will just close by again mentioning my views on migration. We need people in Western Australia. We need the federal government to make it a more targeted scheme so that we can have the skilled labour we desperately need in Western Australia and get some of those homes built.

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House) [10.28 am]: I want to make a few comments about this motion. I will be focusing my comments on skilled migration, and I will make some comments about the foreign buyer surcharge as well. It is interesting that Hon Ben Dawkins indicated his interest in influencing a policy area that is primarily driven at a federal level, because there is a way that he could have had a more direct influence on that, of course, and that is if he was in the federal Parliament. I am sure that Pauline Hanson's One Nation would welcome him into her federal team, and I would welcome him joining the federal Parliament as well!

I want to talk about skilled migration and the foreign buyers surcharge. I note the comment by Hon Steve Martin that the Western Australian economy has always relied on foreign investment and it always will. It is a silly and ill-informed notion that we could operate the level of our economy the way it is operating now without a degree of foreign investment. Right now, what we do not have enough of is bricklayers, carpenters and other construction trades to keep up with our needs. To deal with that, we can put in place a range of policies, some of which I touched on in yesterday's debate. It is about skilling up local people and also skilled migration. We have to do both of those things. We have made a huge investment in a range of measures to build our skilled local workforce for now and the future. We are doing that in the context of a record unemployment rate of 3.6 per cent as of February. We need to attract workers from interstate and overseas to make sure that we have a pipeline of skilled workers. It is also the case that other states and territories are facing similar workforce demands and so we are in competition with that. We need to do whatever we can.

We have been working directly with the construction industry. Indeed, I was at an event last night with the Housing Industry Association about trying to encourage more women into the residential construction industry to increase the capability of the workforce and produce more skilled workers. We are investing \$52.3 million to encourage more apprentices into the good jobs in the building and construction industry, such as milestone payments of \$1 000 to encourage apprentices to complete their apprenticeship and a range of new initiatives funded in support of, and to grow, the construction workforce.

The Construction Training Fund has allocated \$21.2 million in its apprenticeship support package to build on the existing and successful apprentice completion grant program, which has issued more than a thousand completion payments since it was announced in 2023–24. A \$16 million boost to the government's apprentice tool allowance enables eligible apprentices to a \$1 000 rebate to help them purchase tools or safety equipment, with \$26 million allocated to provide additional support to employers in the building and construction industry. Eligible employers of three to four-year apprentices will receive a base grant of some \$15 000, up from \$12 000 previously. Employers of 18 to 24-month apprentices will receive a base grant of \$12 500, up from \$10 000. Bonus rates for employing women or mature-age apprentices or trainees will also be doubled from 20 per cent to 40 per cent to help improve diversity in the building and construction industry and address skill shortages by tapping into those under-utilised areas of the workforce. A further \$5 million has been allocated to the Construction Training Fund's capital grants program for private registered training organisations to upgrade their facilities and equipment.

Of course, that is not even mentioning the record level of investment in TAFE facilities and equipment across the state, and the fee-free courses and the reduced-fee courses as well. These initiatives build on a recent \$21.5 million expansion of the group training organisation wage subsidy program to offer generous subsidies for employers to cover the average estimated award wage of full-time apprentices. The Job Ready skill sets that were developed during COVID have continued because they are an incredibly popular way to get people into the construction industry. The bricklaying Job Ready program, for example, offers a combination of training and workplace placement at building sites, giving participants the opportunity to learn basic skills and understand what the industry looks like.

Whether it is building and construction or electrical apprenticeship commencements, they have all more than doubled in the past three years and in 2022 reached 4 890. That is the highest number on record. We will continue to support employers, apprentices, trainees, the mid-career workforce and high school students to update their skills through programs such as the adult apprenticeship scheme. In addition, skilled migration is a key component. Last year we introduced temporary measures in the state nominated migration program to help meet current skill needs, including adding 34 construction occupations to WA's skilled migration occupation list, waiving the skilled migration program \$200 application fee and adding a new skilled migration employment register to connect skilled migrants with Western Australian jobs. That is complemented by the Build a Life in WA campaign supporting construction, manufacturing and other priority industries by encouraging workers across Australia and internationally to make the move to WA to work and live.

I mentioned, and Hon Steve Martin mentioned it as well, that when we were elected in 2017, we introduced a seven per cent foreign buyers duty surcharge. That came into effect in 2019. As at 18 April 2024, the surcharge raised some \$26.8 million against 846 transactions in 2023–24. It is estimated to raise a further \$97 million over the next three years. That surcharge applies to all purchases of residential property in Western Australia by a foreign individual, foreign corporation or foreign trust. The surcharge does not apply to foreign persons who are Australian permanent residents or New Zealand citizens on a special category visa. We made some changes to that surcharge to encourage foreign capital to assist us meet our housing needs. The surcharge is refunded if the buyer constructs or refurbishes 10 or more dwellings on the land or subdivides the land for the purposes of constructing 10 or more dwellings. In November last year, the Duties Act was amended so that the refund is available even if the purchased land has a residence on it or is not vacant at the time of purchase because industry was telling us that there was a blockage in getting those houses built. I also note that every jurisdiction, except for the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory, administers a foreign buyers duty surcharge on residential property.

The government will not be supporting the motion today. I encourage the mover of the motion that if he wants to have a direct influence on federal policy, consider moving federal.

HON WILSON TUCKER (Mining and Pastoral) [10.37 am]: I would like to focus on the words “housing emergency” or “housing crisis”, or however you want to word it. I think we have all admitted in some capacity that there is a housing crisis. I do not think that is very controversial. If we are talking about a housing crisis, we need to talk about renters' rights and the 30 per cent of the population in WA who rent. If we are talking about renters' rights, it is impossible to ignore the recent changes to the Residential Tenancies Act. Today, I will focus on some of the unintended consequences that we may see as a result of those recent changes.

I will quickly say that when we talk about immigration, I do not share the view of Hon Ben Dawkins that immigration is a bad thing or that it is out of control or the cause of the housing crisis that we are dealing with at the moment. We know that modern Australia is a country that is created through immigration and that applies to Western Australia. I think it is quite simplistic to say that the housing crisis is caused by immigration. I would attribute it more to the state government and federal government with the indiscriminate housing grants that have put pressure on housing. I think immigration is part of the problem and also the solution to the crisis. When we talk about immigration and people coming in and putting pressure on housing, we have to manage that rate of change.

It is an input or lever that is part of a complex beast. The dreaded change has to be managed so that we can deal with the unintended consequences and the pressure that could be applied. However, I think it is quite simplistic to say that the housing crisis is caused by immigration. I do not share the views of Hon Ben Dawkins when it comes to immigration.

I will move on to the Residential Tenancies Act. I will say that there are some good bits to the Residential Tenancies Act. I will not dredge up the debate that we have just had. I am a proud dog dad and have two very energetic and sometimes noisy border collies, so I liked the pet provisions in the bill. Hanging up furnishings and making minor modifications to rentals is all good stuff. However, there are different ways of looking at it after the changes. We had the weakest rental tenancy laws in the country before the changes, and we have the weakest residential tenancy laws after the changes. The sad reality is that this government had the opportunity to modernise those laws and bring them in line with the rest of the country but failed to do that. Now we are entering an election and will certainly not see any more changes this year, and I would not hold my breath for next year as well.

We have heard about this second tranche of reforms that are potentially coming from the Minister for Commerce. I feel like a bit of a carrot was dangled to some of the rental lobby groups: “You may not be happy with the changes that we saw as part of this bill—the recent changes to the Residential Tenancies Act—but there are changes coming in the future.” We have not seen a date for that, so I would not hold my breath for the next term either. It is potentially going to be another five years until we see any more changes to the Residential Tenancies Act. We will be living with the reality of these changes for a long time.

I think there are going to be unintended consequences of the changes to the Residential Tenancies Act, particularly to no-grounds evictions, rent bidding and rent controls. Those are the three components that I think are really fundamental to WA being behind the country when it comes to renters' rights. I have spoken about no-grounds

evictions. I think all members should be familiar with what that means by this stage. It is basically when a landlord does not have to renew a lease at the end of a fixed term contract and does not have to give a reason. I was recently the recipient of a no grounds-eviction.

Hon Sue Ellery: Honourable member, will you take an interjection? Were you on a fixed-term lease?

Hon WILSON TUCKER: Yes.

Hon Sue Ellery: You would not have been protected by the provisions you are talking about. It was a fixed-term lease. You would not have been protected by the provisions you are seeking in respect of no-grounds evictions.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: The lease was not renewed using no-grounds. They did not give a reason why.

Hon Sue Ellery: If it was a fixed-term lease, the provisions you want to remove no-grounds evictions would not have applied. They don't apply to fixed-term leases anywhere in Australia.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: For no-grounds, do they have to give a legitimate reason why they are removing the tenant?

Hon Sue Ellery: No-grounds, if you were to do it, would apply to periodic leases, not the one you were on, honourable member. You signed a lease for a specified period of time. The no-grounds evictions provisions would not have assisted you at all.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: They did not give a reason as to why —

Hon Sue Ellery: No, because you signed for a fixed period. It is like when you enter into a contract for a fixed period and the contract comes to an end.

Hon Ben Dawkins: Can we talk about this offline later?

Hon WILSON TUCKER: Yes, we can talk about this offline.

My understanding is that they have to provide a reason when it comes to the end of the contract.

Several members interjected.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: We can take this offline.

The PRESIDENT: Indeed, I would encourage fewer interjections and to refocus on the content of the motion.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: Okay, that is fine. Look, I am happy to take interjections and be clarified on this point. We will move on.

It potentially does not apply to my situation and I am potentially misinterpreting it. I am not here to talk about my situation. There are other people in much more difficult and precarious situations in WA. I would like to talk about rent bidding and rent caps. In WA, the state government has outlawed rent bidding. It has said "We don't support rent bidding and we don't want to see it occur", but it has only banned the solicitation of the bid, not the acceptance. Other jurisdictions including Victoria are moving to remove both components. We heard comments from the Minister for Commerce saying that it is still expected that rent bidding will occur under these changes. It seems like the government has basically done half the job here. It has said "We don't support rent bidding, but we still expect it to occur."

There is a massive loophole in the changes to these laws. That means that somebody can still look at the fixed price on a rental and then rock up on the day, have a conversation, write another figure on a bit of paper, hand it to the real estate agent and have the bid accepted. There are a lot of interpretations of what solicitation can mean. We heard the minister talk about the "secret shoppers" who will be there. There are obviously thousands of homes listed—well, maybe not thousands at the moment, considering WA has the tightest rental market in the country.

However, it will be obviously incredibly hard to police and enforce. I think a bus could be driven through that loophole. The solicitation component will certainly be open to interpretation. Rent bidding will still occur, and WA will be dealing with this mixed-message mode around rent bidding for the next five years.

The other component here is rent caps. I would not go so far as to completely agree with the Greens. I am not sure that government intervention into the market here is necessarily a good thing. However, the restrictions on rent price increases will be able to occur once every 12 months. I think one of the unintended consequences we could see here is that rather than an increase every six months, there will be a bit of fear and greed incorporated as part of the increase once every 12 months. We could see a very significant single lump sum increase within that 12-month period. We are seeing constant increases in rent rises. If we extrapolate those price increases, the conversation could be "This is your one chance to increase the rent per year. I think you should raise it significantly." There are no caps or measures for that price increase. President, I am out of time.

HON BEN DAWKINS (South West) [10.47 am] — in reply: We could break the problem with politics in this country into three parts. Number one, we have a confidence problem. There is a problem with the confidence of these supposedly very experienced honourable members, such as Hon Steve Martin and Hon Sue Ellery. They pre-prepare

their speeches so that no matter what I say in my speech when I move the motion, the honourable members just give me something pre-prepared. They do not even respond to the points that are raised in a meaningful way. I would say we have a confidence problem with some of our representation in this country and state.

Another part of the problem is the perpetuation of the two-party problem in this country and state at the moment. The major parties are deliberately not listening to the people in any way. As I said before, Pauline Hanson's most recent animation episode of *Please Explain* shows that the major parties have an addiction to immigration because it props up the economy and wallpaper over all their previous mismanagement, which we have already discussed at length. I do not have to talk about it now, because each party points the finger at the other about the mismanagement. It is on the record that both major parties have brought us to this situation. They continue to prop up the economy and wallpaper over their previous mistakes with this obsession with immigration. It is not going to help them because One Nation is actually listening to the people. This view is a major part of the One Nation platform nationally. I said "pause immigration"—that was my terminology—and we can pause immigration, because Prime Minister Anthony Albanese allowed a record 765 000 migration arrivals in 2024. This has exacerbated the housing problem at exactly the wrong time. Hon Wilson Tucker has even misquoted me as saying that immigration is a bad thing. I am talking about a partial solution for the problem we are experiencing at the moment. That point was deliberately ignored. We could pause immigration right now for the rest of this year. We are still almost at the beginning of the year, so let us pause it for six months. I think the January or February immigration figure was 100 000 in a month. In the six months to date, we still will have let through more people than we did in the years up to 2011. Around the time of the Sydney Olympics in 2000, we were talking about 100 000 migrant arrivals a year. Now we are at 765 000 a year. To oversimplify the debate and dismiss my argument by saying that I am anti-immigration in general is ridiculous. I am specifically talking about the circumstances that we face at this time. It is easy for the major parties to dismiss my argument, because they simply do not listen and they do not realise how many people are asking questions of their representatives. This happened before I entered Parliament. Young people would come up to me and say, "Why are we letting so many people into the country when I can't get a house?" It is part of the existing problem and only in a crisis would we talk about pausing immigration, as I just did. One Nation's policy is to substantially reduce immigration to a sustainable level. Targeted skilled migration will be part of that in the future, but we need to get immigration down to a sustainable level. Let us not just dismiss it, please, by saying that I said immigration in general is a bad thing. Both my kids have Irish passports—they were born here. Obviously, we have all benefited from people coming to this country as migrants, and to oversimplify this argument is ridiculous. We are talking about reducing immigration to deal with the current housing crisis.

The major parties are putting their heads in the sand and not listening to the people. People do not have to live their whole life online, but if they live just part of their life online, they will see the disillusionment with the two major parties, which are putting their heads in the sand. The common narrative that comes up online is that the two-party system has destroyed this country. It is continuing to destroy the Australian dream of owning your own home and a certain lifestyle that previous generations used to enjoy, and it is destroying Australia with things like excessive immigration. The two major parties are, effectively, propping up and making up for their previous mistakes. They are addicted to immigration and they are not listening to the people today who need to get a house. This is an emergency. It is belligerent and ignorant behaviour and a failure of representative democracy that the two major parties continue to ignore what Australians want. That is the power of the One Nation movement. Members can criticise me as much as they want, but the people I represent want a change in this area. The major parties continue to avoid these sorts of changes because immigration helps their property developer mates, their donors, and it would be unpopular with the big end of town, which gives donations to the two major parties. Self-interest is having an impact and the major parties are failing to address these issues.

The last problem I will refer to today is political correctness. The two major parties are addicted to political correctness. They are too scared to take a stance that will actually help the people, because in our society now it is risky, as I experienced when I was called a racist by Hon Pierre Yang several times last week or the week before. This is a problem. It is a cancel culture. If a person mentions something like the volume of immigration, without referring to any race of people in the world, they can be called a racist. Now we have this political correctness problem, but it helps One Nation members because we do not mind speaking the truth. We can put up with being bullied and abused for speaking the truth. It does not affect us. That is why the One Nation movement is gathering so much momentum, with the recent polls showing that so many people are coming across to One Nation.

When Hon Steve Martin wrote his article on 7 May, he mentioned immigration and how it was suddenly a factor in our housing crisis. Now he is backtracking from that statement because of political correctness. The Liberal Party supporter base would love him to come out and say that, yes, it is part of the problem, but he is too scared. The major parties like to play a small-target strategy in which they do not speak for the people and they try to play this political correctness game because they are too scared to have the courage to stand up here—like I have today and over the last couple of weeks—and speak for something that will help people get into houses immediately during this crisis. Hon Steve Martin should not worry about this perceived political correctness. He should have some courage and say what the factors are and which levers he would pull if he were to get into government. That is what the people want from the two-party system, which is failing us with a complete lack of courage and a failure

to listen. This has happened because someone in the Liberal Party headquarters has said that if Hon Steve Martin says something in this house about immigration—in the same way that I have—and that it is contributing to the housing problem, somehow he might lose some votes or donors or something like that. This is pathetic. Be honest, have courage, listen to the people and get up and speak. This is something that comes up all the time. Why do we have record immigration levels at a time when we also have record homelessness and a record shortage of housing? No-one is prepared to address this issue in the meaningful terms that I have put forward today.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.

ONSHORE ADVANCED MANUFACTURING OPPORTUNITIES

Motion

HON PETER FOSTER (Mining and Pastoral) [10.58 am] — without notice: I move —

That the Legislative Council acknowledges the commitment of the Albanese and Cook governments to diversify our economy and grow our onshore advanced manufacturing opportunities.

It gives me great pleasure to rise today and move the motion standing in my name—a future made in Australia. Australia needs to be a country that makes things. Sadly, after the last decade or more, we have seen the consequences of manufacturing jobs being sent overseas. We have seen fewer highly skilled jobs, many missed opportunities and, sadly, Australia being left exposed during the pandemic.

Hon Neil Thomson interjected.

Hon PETER FOSTER: I will not be taking any interjections.

Hon Neil Thomson interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I think the honourable member has the right to be heard in silence.

Hon PETER FOSTER: Thank you, President, for your protection. Australia, and, indeed, Western Australia, is fortunate to have an abundance of natural resources. We need to resource the opportunities of those resources to value-add and employ more Western Australians in the manufacturing industry. The reality is that we have been sending manufacturing offshore for years. The previous federal Liberal–National government lacked ambition and vision when it came to manufacturing. It was not until 2020 that it announced its JobMaker plan. Unfortunately, it was too little, too late.

We will never forget in 2013 when former Treasurer Joe Hockey famously dared Holden to close its doors. In 2017, it did. That is the reality of the situation. The current Liberal–National alliance, surprisingly, or perhaps unsurprisingly, still has no plans for manufacturing here in Western Australia. We will never forget that the Liberals and Nationals closed the Midland rail yards in the 1990s. I am proud to be part of a government that has brought railcar manufacturing back to Western Australia. I want to acknowledge the work of Rio Tinto. It has partnered with Gemco Rail to bring railcar manufacturing to the Pilbara in an industry first.

A 2020 report produced by the Australia Institute entitled *A fair share for Australian manufacturing* states —

Australia ranks last in manufacturing self-sufficiency among all OECD countries. Australians use \$565 billion worth of manufactures each year, however, we only produce \$380 billion. Therefore, Australia produces only 68 per cent (just over two-thirds) of what we use: less than any other OECD economy.

Why do we need local manufacturing? It was manufacturing workers who kept food on the table and adapted to make ventilators and other PPE during the pandemic. Manufacturing workers will produce the parts, wires and components that we need for the clean energy transition—components for solar panels, wind turbines and batteries. When we have a strong manufacturing sector, we create highly skilled, high-paying jobs, which support our economy and grow our nation.

During the pandemic we saw disruption and disconnection to global supply chains, which led to delays in production, then delays to deliveries of supplies. Consumers were ultimately left waiting. Here in Western Australia, there were construction and maintenance delays. Many industries waited on parts to be delivered from overseas, which affected maintenance and shutdown operations. I know that all too well from life in the north west with the mining industry in which there were production delays.

We have spoken in this chamber before about Rex Airlines and the issues it had with delays. It had to wait for plane parts to be delivered from overseas. It highlights how great it would be if we could manufacture those products here in Western Australia, then Rex would not have had flight delays.

Manufacturing is not simply a part of our economy; it is of strategic importance to both our national and state security. We know there is global uncertainty because of inflation issues in the USA. There are economic slowdowns in China and conflicts in Europe and the Middle East. We are also going through a clean energy transition. We need to build capacity in Australia for strategic investment and incentives. Last month, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced his government’s plan to introduce a “future made in Australia” act, to boost investment, create jobs and seize future opportunities.

Treasurer Jim Chalmers was recently reported in *The Australian* as saying —

Our work will be responsible and methodical and guided by where we can be more competitive, where it contributes to an orderly path to net zero, where it builds the capabilities of our people and regions, where it makes us more secure, and where it boosts the private sector and delivers value for money.

This means there are important opportunities in areas such as refining and processing critical minerals, moving up the value chain of battery production, renewable hydrogen and green metals.

The Albanese Labor government is committed to diversifying the Australian economy and growing advanced manufacturing opportunities. It has already taken significant steps. In 2022, it established Jobs and Skills Australia to address Australia's economy-wide skills shortage and invested in over 480 000 fee-free TAFE and training places. It has also invested substantial funds to upgrade TAFEs and provided 20 000 additional university places for disadvantaged students. That is fantastic because we now see a more highly skilled workforce.

In 2022, it provided a further \$2.4 billion investment for the national broadband network. This is important because for businesses to be more profitable, they need to have better access to the NBN. In 2023, the federal government established the national reconstruction fund, which is a \$15 billion fund, to revive manufacturing by supporting projects in several priority areas, including renewable and low-emission technologies, medical science, transport, value-adding in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, value-adding in the resources industry—which I am particularly interested in—and defence capabilities and enabling capabilities.

A number of grants have been announced. I will not go through them, but the Minister for Industry and Science, Hon Ed Husic, has announced grants. Yesterday, the Minister for Resources and Northern Australia, Hon Madeleine King, also announced a number of grants to support this initiative. The federal government is not working alone in this space. The Cook Labor government is committed to not only working with the Albanese government to boost advanced manufacturing here in Western Australia, but also increasing capacity and providing skilled employment—jobs of the future for our kids.

Point of Order

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I reference standing order 36, “Reading of speeches” —

Except when introducing a Bill or by leave of the President, a member shall not read a speech.

I would like the member to table that speech, please.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Steve Martin): Honourable member, I do not think there is a point of order. I think the honourable member is referring to notes. Are you willing to table those notes?

Hon PETER FOSTER: No, I am not.

Debate Resumed

Hon PETER FOSTER: Thank you, Acting President. I will continue.

Both the federal government and the state government are putting in place to grow advanced manufacturing opportunities. I refer to my personal notes because, as I said, there is a large number of initiatives.

I refer to a document that came out in April last year entitled *Future state: Accelerating Diversify WA*. That document discusses our government's plan to harness natural resources—of which we have an abundance here in WA, both in agriculture and our mining industry—and to build upon our strengths in manufacturing to target diversification opportunities in areas that are experiencing global growth. There is a lot of green energy transitioning around the world and we need to tap into that by making solar panels, batteries and wind turbines here in WA. In the future state plan, there are nine targeted sector-specific opportunities. They include production and scaling of renewable hydrogen; advanced critical minerals processing, which, again, is of particular importance to me; manufacturing of medical products and digital health services, which as we know is a growing space; and decommissioning of oil and gas infrastructure, and I recently met with Chevron to talk about the large body of work it is doing to decommission its plants in the north west. Those projects are worth over \$900 million to the WA economy. I am grateful for those decommissioning opportunities. Many of those products are decommissioned through Onslow in the north west. The Onslow marine supply base receives those items. They are broken up and sent away. Some of those products come back into the system. Some of the products from those decommissioning plants are recycled and reused, which is a great outcome. Recycling is advanced manufacturing and it is supporting jobs, which I think is a fantastic outcome.

I know I have only five minutes left and there are a couple of quick things that I want to get out before my time is over.

Not only has the state government got the *Future state: Accelerating Diversify WA* plan; we are already doing things. Some of the things we are doing are through the regional economic development grants. I have spoken in this chamber a number of times about the RED grants, and I am sure my colleagues have as well. These grants are really important to diversify and grow businesses in regional WA. There has been a strong focus on innovation and new technologies,

manufacturing, value-adding to the agricultural sector and giving a boost to critical community services such as child care in regional WA. This is particularly important. If we want people to return to the workforce, we need those childcare services.

I think it needs to be said again that royalties for regions still exists. We are using royalties for regions funding to diversify our economy. We are not using it on singing toilets and dancing cows and all those other things that we have talked about before.

Hon Jackie Jarvis interjected.

Hon PETER FOSTER: That is right. We are putting that funding towards sustainable growth in our regions, because we know that if we want people to live, raise a family and stay in the regions, we need to invest in the liveability of our regions—in things such as child care, education, health and long-term career opportunities such as jobs in advanced manufacturing. I will not have time to talk about individual grants. If members want to take the time to look those up, they will see a number of businesses supported by the RED grants that are diversifying our regional towns.

Before I finish, I want to briefly mention two things. I acknowledge the advocacy and work of the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union, of which I am proudly a member. This union knows that a strong manufacturing sector creates highly skilled and high-wage jobs, supports our economy and is vital for Australia's sovereign capability. The union continues to advocate for massive investment in future industries through mineral processing, renewable energy and batteries, and research and development. That is what a future made in Australia is all about. It is really disappointing that members on the other side of the chamber not only do not have a plan for manufacturing, but also find highly skilled and high-paying jobs a joke. I find that a disgrace.

Hon Neil Thomson interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon PETER FOSTER: I also want to mention that yesterday I had the great opportunity to meet the national secretary of the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union, Steve Murphy, who, like me, has come from the Hunter Valley in New South Wales. He started as an apprentice fitter at Tubemakers in Newcastle—there is a lot of manufacturing in Newcastle—and worked his way up from delegate to organiser and is now national secretary of the AMWU. It was great to hear from him about the work he is doing in Canberra to promote advanced manufacturing opportunities. He understands that there is a clean energy revolution. We need to be ready to take advantage of that and get those jobs for the future.

I want to talk about how the north west is welcoming a number of new businesses in the manufacturing space. I mention Camco Engineering. Recently, the member for Pilbara, Hon Stephen Dawson and I attended the Camco Engineering opening in Karratha. I note that Hon Neil Thomson also attended. It was a fantastic day. It was great to welcome a new business to the north west. The business primarily supports the oil and gas industry, and it has a number of workshops here in the Perth metro area. It is actually the business's first workshop outside the Perth metropolitan area. It is great to see that it now has a presence in the north west. The people at Camco in Karratha told me on the day that they are there to stay. Camco fosters employment opportunities and provides local manufacturing and maintenance services to the Pilbara. It was recently awarded a supplier recognition award by Rio Tinto for opening its new workshop in Karratha. We heard from managing director Jonathan Wigley on the day. He talked about Camco's focus on training, learning and development. It was pleasing to learn that over 270 apprentices have gone through Camco Engineering. It is really great that not only are we welcoming a business to the Pilbara, but also it is a business that puts on apprentices. At the moment, Camco has three apprentices at its Karratha site.

In closing, Australia must be a country that makes things. With our abundance of natural resources, our proximity to Asia and India and our advantages of sun and wind, we need to make sure that our future is made here in Western Australia.

HON KLARA ANDRIC (South Metropolitan) [11.14 am]: It is with some excitement that I stand to speak on Hon Peter Foster's fantastic motion today. Let me put it this way: as the daughter of a plumber, welder, gasfitter and boilermaker—certainly all the trades from the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union there—I certainly understand the importance of not only the manufacturing industry, but also the trade and jobs that it brings to our state.

We all know that manufacturing can be viewed as the backbone of innovation, and coming up with an idea is only half the process and half the battle. Manufacturing is the next step that is required to take an idea and make it into a tangible reality. Manufacturing, amongst other things, is progress, and I commend the Cook Labor government for investing in local WA manufacturing. As we all know, manufacturing means local jobs and a stronger and more diverse economy, which is exactly what the Cook Labor government stands for.

I begin by talking about one of the biggest local manufacturing projects to hit our shores in a very long time. I am, of course, talking about the return of railcar manufacturing to Western Australia.

Hon Darren West: Hear, hear!

Hon KLARA ANDRIC: Hear, hear! For over 30 years, the railcar industry in Western Australia lay dormant. In fact, it was gutted by previous Liberal–National governments and outsourced to other states. However, in 2017, the Cook Labor government made a commitment to bring back railcar manufacturing. The world-class train manufacturer Alstom was granted a \$1.25 billion contract to build 246 C-series railcars.

Hon Neil Thomson interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order!

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order, members!

Hon KLARA ANDRIC: Sorry; what was your contribution?

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order! Members, please direct your remarks through the chair. Thank you.

Hon KLARA ANDRIC: The 246 C-series railcars and six new diesel-powered —

Hon Neil Thomson interjected.

Hon KLARA ANDRIC: I will not be taking interjections from you, honourable member.

Furthermore, keeping as much as possible of the endeavour local, the contract had a target of 50 per cent local content. I will mention some of the local supplier companies awarded the contracts. They included Vector Lifting, which is in fact —

Several members interjected.

Hon KLARA ANDRIC: Honourable members, if you do not mind, I would like to make my contribution.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order! Members, please refer your remarks to the chair. Thank you.

Hon KLARA ANDRIC: Thank you very much. As I was getting to saying, one of the local suppliers includes Vector Lifting, which is based in Cockburn. That supplier deals with the turntables and lifting jacks for the railcars. Camco Engineering, which Hon Peter Foster mentioned earlier, based in Canning Vale, provides jigs and fixtures for the Bellevue facility. I understand that federal minister Hon Ed Husic, my very good, dear friend, visited Camco only yesterday during his visit here in WA. Chess Engineering, based in Welshpool, is another fantastic supplier to the manufacture of these railcars. The list is endless, and certainly I will not have time to mention them all today. But I will say that it is, in fact, a much greater contribution compared with the previous Liberal–National government’s not locally sourced interstate production target of a measly two per cent for the B-series railcars. Unlike the opposition, we have a local content target of 50 per cent, as opposed to a measly interstate-produced two per cent. I will leave it at that, honourable member. That is precisely why I will not have interjections coming from that side. I will not even go into the amount of rail that previous Liberal–National governments have built. I actually think—somebody correct me if I am wrong—that Liberal–National governments have built less than six kilometres of rail, ever. Less than six kilometres of rail have been built, at any point in time, by those opposite. That is why I ask the honourable member to remain quiet on this topic.

The Bellevue railcar facility not only provides direct employment for 150 Western Australians, but also is supplied with manufactured parts by 15 local businesses, some of which I mentioned earlier. As we all know, this is a fantastic job creator. Last month, April 2024, we saw a massive railcar milestone as the first C-series train entered into service. I know that some members in this chamber were present on 7 April at the special launch of the C-series train; I see Hon Ayor Makur Chuot nodding her head. She was part of that fantastic launch by the Cook Labor government. I take this opportunity to give a massive shout-out to Hon Rita Saffioti for her—I have said this before—grit and determination when it comes to transport and jobs and making sure that manufacturing is done right here in Western Australia.

In April 2024, the federal Minister for Industry and Science, my very good friend, and “Balkan comrade”, as I like to call him, Hon Ed Husic, along with the federal Minister for Resources, Hon Madeleine King, and the federal Assistant Minister for Trade, Hon Tim Ayres, announced the release of the medical science co-investment plan. Health and medical science research in Australia is, in fact, ranked seventh in the world. Our nation boasts more than 1 200 biotech companies, 55 medical research institutes and 40 medical research–focused universities, yet medical manufacturing accounts for only 0.3 per cent of Australia’s GDP. To take advantage of the sector, the medical science co-investment plan will set out how government and industry can work together to continue to grow opportunities in medical manufacturing. I want to mention that the plan also sets out ways to build on Australia’s existing advantages in clinical trial capability and world-leading therapeutic expertise in oncology, immunology, neurology and cardiovascular diseases.

The Cook government has also had considerable success in attracting local manufacturers through the Diversity WA framework, which was introduced in July 2019. The framework identifies priority areas in which strategic development is needed that matches our state’s strengths.

Innovation and manufacturing go hand in hand, and I want to briefly mention my visit earlier this week to a fantastic manufacturing organisation called Adarsh Australia, whose director is Faz Pollard. Hon Ed Husic and Hon Matt Keogh were also there. This facility has the potential to annually convert more than 3 000 tonnes of wastepaper and cardboard packaging into new packaging and medical consumables. I would love to spend the next five minutes talking about Adarsh and my visit there, but time will not permit. However, I am sure I will have other opportunities to speak about this fantastic organisation and everything it does not only in terms of sustainability, but also as a fantastic manufacturing organisation right here in Western Australia.

HON LORNA HARPER (East Metropolitan) [11.24 am]: It is with pleasure that I rise today to speak to the motion by Hon Peter Foster that the Legislative Council acknowledges the commitment of the Albanese and Cook governments to diversify our economy and grow our onshore advanced manufacturing opportunities.

As the granddaughter of a steelworker, I know very well how important it is for countries to manufacture their own goods. I say that because under the Tory government and the lovely Margaret Thatcher in the UK —

Hon Neil Thomson interjected.

Hon LORNA HARPER: Acting President, I will not be taking interjections. I draw your attention to standing order 50, “Interruptions to Debate”. If the interjections continue, I will draw the member back to that standing order continuously. Thank you.

Under the lovely Margaret Thatcher, we lost all manufacturing in Scotland, so no longer did I have any family members working in the steelworks, because they were all closed. That was of great detriment to manufacturing in Scotland. Similarly, the previous federal Liberal government got rid of all car manufacturing here in Australia, which had a huge impact on the people in that industry. The same thing happened when car manufacturing was ended in Scotland. I know that Linwood is not what people usually think about when they think about car manufacture, but when I was a child, there were quite a few manufacturers in Scotland. Manufacturing is something that societies have done for a very long time. It is essential. It brings a whole group of people together and helps to build communities. It is also very important that we can be self-sustainable when it comes to manufacturing.

Hon Klara Andric made reference to the railcar facility in the lovely East Metropolitan Region; she has stolen a bit of my thunder, but I am going to reiterate this, because it is so important. We now have in the East Metropolitan Region a facility, Bellevue, that is building railcars. When the Midland railyards closed in 1994, that was the end of rail manufacturing in Western Australia. My stepfather, a migrant to this country, actually worked at the Midland railyards when he came here in the early 1960s. He also played in the Midland Pipe Band, which I think was quite well known in the Midland area at the time. Unfortunately, I am still surrounded by bagpipe players. Some people love it; other people endure it!

Bringing in a migrant labour workforce to help manufacture these railcars was important, but we then lost a lot of our rail infrastructure. Rail lines that were closed were then reopened by Hon Alannah MacTiernan. As someone who used the rail network extensively when I lived in Bassendean, I know it is really important for the community to be able to get around by rail. Having nice, new, modern trains is one of the ways we can do that.

I had a great opportunity, along with some of my Labor colleagues, to visit the Bellevue facility. We got to climb up into one of the new carriages and I got to sit in the driver’s seat, with its masses of dials; it is quite extraordinary. Like most people, I thought there would just be a stop-and-go lever, but no; it looked like it could launch a rocket! We fulfilled some people’s dreams of sitting in the train driver’s seat; we were there and we got to see that. It was a great privilege to be able to go and see the place in the East Metropolitan Region where that railcar was built, by a company in a local area with local workers. How important that really is, and how it helps to create a sense of community.

These railcars rotate through five stations and there are specialised tasks to assemble them with, as Hon Klara Andric stated, a local workforce and more than 50 per cent local content. We would all love to have 100 per cent local content, but that is not actually possible at this time due to the disintegration of manufacturing in Australia over the last 30 or 40 years. I am also waiting with great anticipation for when I will be able to utilise these new railcars later this year when the Ellenbrook line opens as part of Metronet. I am somebody who lives out in Ellenbrook, in the wonderful East Metropolitan Region, and this will change the way we live out there. Last week, I attended some professional development in the city, and driving to and from the city every day took almost an hour in the morning and almost an hour in the afternoon. After the railway station opens, I will be able to get from Ellenbrook to the city in about 30 or 35 minutes, and it will be an absolute delight to be able to go in and out. The train line will also open up the social world quite a bit for people in Ellenbrook.

I go back to the Bellevue railcar manufacturing. It will also assist about 15 local businesses. It is a great help. We are manufacturing bogie frames—I love the name “bogie frames”—in Bassendean, battery boxes in Forrestfield, passenger seats in Bayswater, piping in Welshpool and metallic components in Wangara. With that sentence, I will refer to *Possum magic* because I felt like I was saying mornay and Minties and lamingtons et cetera. The great book *Possum magic* is another wonderful creation manufactured in Australia by the wonderful Mem Fox. If you have not read it, buy it and read it to any child you can because it is a wonderful story.

Hon Samantha Rowe interjected.

Hon LORNA HARPER: Well, read it to any child who will sit and listen. Please get their parents' permission.

It is really important that we have local manufacturing, employing local workers and supporting other local businesses. Honourable colleagues on the other side of the chamber may try to decry some of what we are trying to do, but I will say that the Cook Labor and Albanese Labor governments are putting money and effort into bringing manufacturing back to Australia. We need it. Not only that, they are also investing millions of dollars into traineeships and apprenticeships to ensure that we will have the next cohort of plumbers, welders and other tradespeople—members can tell that I am not that trade literate, apart from carpenters—who we will need to be able to build these products. They are investing in the future of Western Australia and Australia. Irrespective of where people are or where their family came from, we all now have the opportunity to encourage our young people to learn skills, to help them build new sectors and new industries, and to continue to build our beautiful and lucky country.

HON SHELLEY PAYNE (Agricultural) [11.32 am]: It gives me great pleasure to rise today to talk about Hon Peter Foster's great motion about manufacturing.

The first thing I want to do is congratulate the 2024 winner of the AgriFutures Rural Women's Award, Mandy Walker. I have not had a chance to congratulate her on winning. AgriFutures supports the Rural Women's Award every year, and this is the twentieth year. Actually, I think this award has been going for 19 years. It empowers and celebrates women who show leadership in their communities. I am talking about Mandy and manufacturing because Mandy, who is from Wongan Hills, co-manages Walkers Diesel Services, which not only does heavy diesel repair and maintenance, but also offers quite a lot of manufacturing and engineering services. She manufactures chaser bins and machining fabrication and repair solutions for the agricultural industry. Mandy won this award because her focus is on developing a collaborative business model for all the wheatbelt engineering enterprises to integrate into the defence industry supply chain. We all know that just over a year ago it was announced that we will have the AUKUS nuclear-powered submarines. She is trying to buffer regional businesses against the seasonal fluctuations of the agricultural industry and enhance their participation in the lucrative defence industry supply chain. She has a vision for regional prosperity. For winning this award, she gets a \$15 000 grant from Westpac, and she will use that grant to help ensure that local businesses in the wheatbelt can seize opportunities in the defence industry and foster long-term economic diversity, which is one of our government's goals.

For a couple of minutes, I want to talk about the defence industry and the related manufacturing opportunities in Western Australia. Western Australia, particularly, has a really long and proud history of supporting defence in its mission of protecting Australia and Western Australia. I think all members know about HMAS *Stirling*, which is the nation's largest naval base. We also have the Australian Marine Complex in Henderson. If people go down to the motocross track, which I do quite regularly, they will drive through the huge Australian Marine Complex. It is the home of the nation's largest marine industry; approximately one-third of the economic value from that site in Henderson comes from the defence industry. It is very pleasing that HMAS *Stirling* will continue to be the home of Australia's current and future submarine fleet and will serve as a base for Australia's future nuclear-powered and conventionally armed submarines. As early as 2027, we will start hosting on a rotational basis UK and US nuclear-powered submarines, and we will be involved in the maintenance of those submarines. Right now, we are looking at developing and building our capacity to do the maintenance on the submarines. This is anticipated to generate another 500 jobs. The other great thing is that the commonwealth made commitments to invest heavily in our infrastructure, with an \$8 billion upgrade to HMAS *Stirling* to facilitate the rotational presence of the AUKUS submarines. Also, some of our northern bases—RAAF Base Learmonth, RAAF Base Curtin and the joint Naval Communication Station Harold E Holt—will get a big upgrades package of \$3.8 billion. We are also set to receive a significant share of the recent \$11 billion shipbuilding announcement. Western Australia will be a primary location for designing, building and sustaining vessels for the Australian Defence Force, which is great. This is expected to create about 1 200 new jobs in Western Australia over the next decade.

We all know that Western Australia is a global leader in remote autonomous systems, mainly due to our mining industry. People would be aware that we are also home to the Australian Automation and Robotics Precinct, which is 40 kilometres north of Perth. This has all led to us being awarded the build of the future fleet of large, optionally crewed surface vessels, which will begin in 2030. These are great initiatives. If anyone is interested, they can read the AUKUS defence ministers' joint statement, which was released last month and talks about the potential opportunities.

I also commend the Cook government; last month, it announced a new website, The Other Force, to encourage Western Australians to explore all the future employment and career pathways in the growing defence industry. It is part of the WA government's \$11 million investment over four years to help build our defence industry workforce. That investment is set to create more than 4 000 jobs in Western Australia over the next decade. The website has information for both workers and employers on the range of government programs and incentives to help them grow their workforce and take advantage of all the initiatives and manufacturing opportunities coming up in the near future. I want to bring this back to Mandy and commend her for the work she is doing to bring regional businesses into these big opportunities in our defence industry.

Another thing I wanted to mention is the budget boost earlier this month, with the Cook government powering up the energy manufacturing sector. We have invested \$26.4 million in locally built clean-energy components to

drive local jobs. I have talked previously about the standalone power systems that Horizon Power has been rolling out in the regions. Since 2021, we have delivered 56 standalone power systems built locally here in WA. The \$18.4 million will roll out another 50 locally manufactured standalone power systems in regional WA. Part of the announced funding is \$8 million to help develop a local wind turbine manufacturing industry, which is great. That funding will be available as grants. We look forward to those grants opening soon, and hopefully a few people will be interested in looking at increasing the opportunities for the manufacturing of wind turbine facilities. There are so many potential projects for wind farms around the regions, and it would be great to have the manufacture of some of those components by local businesses.

There is one last thing I want to mention, but I will not talk about it in full because I know that other members want to speak. The regional economic development grant program has helped manufacturing by funding over 72 manufacturing-related projects. Obviously, this is in the regions. Regional people are great at taking on manufacturing because of their ability to think outside the box. Our regional upbringings make us really creative. Manufacturing is a good thing, and we see a lot of that in the regions. Round 7 of the grants is open. It is a double grant program, with \$10 million up for grabs. I hope everyone will encourage local businesses, particularly manufacturing businesses, to apply for this round of RED grants. It has been such a successful program. I leave my comments there to give others the opportunity to speak.

HON JACKIE JARVIS (South West — Minister for Agriculture and Food) [11.41 am]: I also rise to speak on this fabulous motion. I am a little disappointed Hon Neil Thomson has been called away on urgent parliamentary business. For all his huffing and puffing and interjections, I was hoping he would be outlining the opposition's stance on diversifying the economy and advancing manufacturing. I tried to find out what the Liberal Party's policies are on these matters, and I was struggling a bit. I know that there was a press conference earlier this week by Hon Neil Thomson in his new role as shadow Treasurer. He said something about this being the boom that no-one feels. Labor begs to differ. Economic diversification, as we know, has been a high priority for this government and has been a major focus since 2017. Since 2021, more than \$3.8 billion has been invested in economic diversification initiatives and a further \$463 million in last year's budget. We are obviously still waiting to understand what budgets might look like under a future government of members opposite. In the press conference last week, the shadow Treasurer criticised the budget that has not yet been handed down and then told the pack of waiting journalists that the Liberal Party would present its policies going forward. We are still none the wiser.

The efforts to diversify our economy are working. Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows the labour force is growing strongly in a number of sectors. I want to focus on non-mining sectors. Since 2017, the professional and technical services labour force has grown by almost 40 per cent. The health care and social assistance labour force is up over 43 per cent. The labour force in education and training sectors is up 28 per cent. Economic diversification priority has also seen strong growth in smaller but significant sectors such as media and telecommunications, with the labour force up by 39 per cent since 2017. Even employment in arts and recreation services is up by over 18 per cent. Of course, we know that growth in the mining sector is particularly strong. It is also worth noting that in addition to traditional mining, there has been significant growth in new commodities such as battery minerals. The value of lithium production increased from \$294 million in 2016 to \$16.2 billion—a 55-fold increase—under this government. Employment in this sector has also increased threefold in the same period.

This government has a multifaceted approach to diversifying the WA economy. I have seen firsthand the importance of our invest and trade team in building new overseas markets. I have personally had the opportunity to engage with invest and trade teams in Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and, most recently, the UK and China. My colleague Hon Stephen Dawson has had the opportunity to visit the new WA trade hub in Texas, which enhances our opportunities to trade in that part of the world. This government is working hard to create a conducive environment for investment and in leading the development of strategic industrial areas. We are waiting with bated breath to see what the shadow Treasurer has in store for us. It is disappointing that no-one from the opposition has stood to speak on this motion. No-one from the opposition has sought to outline its policy on diversifying the economy.

I just reflect on last year's budget. It is obviously budget day. We will have more excitement later this afternoon. Last year's budget included \$28.2 million to support the state's invest and trade hubs. As I said, it included a \$35 million top-up to the industrial land planning fund, which prioritised planning and de-constraining initiatives to attract investment around the Pilbara strategic industrial area. There was \$100 million for the industrial land development fund provided in the 2021–22 budget, and the 2022–23 budget saw that increase to \$135 million. I will leave it there because we still have a couple of members who want to speak on this motion. I want to congratulate Hon Peter Foster for bringing this excellent motion forward today.

HON AYOR MAKUR CHUOT (North Metropolitan) [11.46 am]: I rise in support of this fantastic motion by my colleague Hon Peter Foster that acknowledges the commitment of both the Cook and Albanese governments to diversifying our economy and growing onshore advanced manufacturing opportunities. It is a fantastic day to have this motion, as this afternoon we will hear our budget delivered by our government. We have no idea what it will be yet, but I am sure it will be right for the people of Western Australia. I look forward to what will come out of our fantastic budget this afternoon.

As many members may know, our government is committed to supporting local manufacturing and creating new job opportunities for our citizens. I am proud to highlight that we have made significant progress towards achieving these goals. One of the Cook Labor government's most recent achievements is the launch of the C-series railcars, which we heard about earlier from my colleague Hon Klara Andric. The Premier and our most hardworking Deputy Premier launched the program. We know her history in the infrastructure industry. Many of us appreciate the work that she has done in government. Our government supported this manufacturing initiative of the C-series railcars for Metronet. It is the first time in over 30 years that railcars have been manufactured in WA. This initiative has supported 15 local businesses and invested \$15 million to secure the railcar manufacturing and servicing industry. It is worth noting that the Midland Workshops were shut down by the Liberals in the 1990s. It makes this wonderful initiative so fantastic for our government because the 90s was not long ago. Imagine, if this had been done in the 90s, it would have been fantastic for people in Western Australia. Our government has also committed \$26.4 million towards advanced manufacturing in the state, including an investment of \$18.4 million to manufacture 50 locally built power systems for cheaper renewable energy and \$8 million in local business contracts to build wind turbines. We also launched the investment attraction fund to enable coordinated and targeted investment in various industries as part of the Diversify WA strategy, with over \$20 million already invested in manufacturing biotechnology, pharmaceutical and medical imaging products in the health industry. We have also invested in vocational education and training programs that provide hands-on experience and practical skills to students and partnered with industry to develop training programs tailored to the specific needs of the manufacturing industry. In addition, we are working with universities and research institutions to support the development of a highly skilled workforce equipped with the latest technology and expertise in advanced manufacturing.

Our government has spent \$12.2 million to open the Sustainable Innovative Food Technologies Centre in the Peel region, helping to boost WA's food and beverage manufacturing industry. We have also made a \$2 million investment in medical manufacturing in Bentley, creating around 70 new jobs and employing 30 new contractors. Our broad health and medical life sciences strategy has been granted \$8.65 million to attract investors and boost innovation in manufacturing medical products locally.

I also want to take a moment to contrast our current government's efforts with the lack of prioritisation that the Liberal and National governments in Western Australia have shown towards diversification, skills development, small to medium-sized enterprise support, regulatory efficiency, infrastructure investment and environmental sustainability in the manufacturing sector. This is evident in the research and has been highlighted by the things I have mentioned. It is a shame that previous governments failed to recognise the importance of these factors in creating a strong and resilient manufacturing industry. We are committed to making up for lost time and are working with industry to provide the necessary support and resources to our manufacturing sector in Western Australia.

Our government, together with the Albanese government, is committed to ensuring that Western Australia's manufacturing industry thrives in the years to come and continues to do what we think is right. We heard about all these fantastic initiatives from members and Minister Jarvis earlier today. We aim to create an environment that supports local businesses and encourages them to invest in advanced manufacturing. We are committed to building a sustainable future for Western Australia and we believe that the manufacturing industry plays a crucial role in this beautiful country. Of course, we want to promote the potential of our community by investing in the area of manufacturing industries and providing it extra government support. We have a platform to actually boost and support innovators in the community.

I thank Hon Peter Foster for this fantastic motion.

HON PETER FOSTER (Mining and Pastoral) [11.53 am] — in reply: I am grateful for the opportunity to close the debate this morning. I join with a couple of my colleagues on this side of the chamber in reflecting upon the fact that not a single member of the Liberal–National alliance spoke in support of or against this motion today. I think that says a lot about what we are going to be dealing with at the upcoming state election. We are seeing a policy void on the other side of the chamber. It was presented to us yet again today. Opposition members had a perfect opportunity in this place to get up to talk about their plans to diversify the economy and grow onshore manufacturing opportunities and they did not do so. I condemn them for not doing so.

A number of members rose today to speak in support of the motion and the actions of both the Cook Labor government and Albanese Labor government to diversify our economy and grow advanced manufacturing opportunities. On this side of the chamber, we know that the future of Australia is made in Australia. A number of members talked about businesses and initiatives that have been taking place in their electorates and affecting their family members. It is important that we reflect on this. By growing advanced manufacturing opportunities here in WA, we are creating the jobs of the future for our children and seeing the clean energy transition.

As I said in my earlier contribution, we need to be making the wind turbines, solar panels and batteries here in WA. I did not quite get around to talking about it earlier, but I had the privilege of attending the opening of the vanadium battery business in Wangara with Hon Madeleine King. That was earlier this year in January. It is harnessing some of the critical minerals found here in WA to make batteries that will store energy and power our future. One of those batteries is making its way up to the Kimberley and will be in Kununurra. That is in partnership with

Horizon Power. I really look forward to the learnings that we will get from having this battery up to Kununurra. They were saying it will last 30 to 50 years. It is great that we are going to have a battery that will potentially last that long to power that community.

I want to acknowledge and thank Hon Klara Andric for her comments in support of my motion today, especially around railcar manufacturing and Faz Pollard and the team at Adarsh. I am disappointed I could not join her for that trip, but Faz has reached out to me and invited me out to his facilities out there. I really look forward to finding some time to check them out.

I would like to acknowledge the comments of Hon Lorna Harper. I thank her as well for rising and speaking in support of my motion. I think she really drove home the importance of manufacturing. She talked about her experiences back home in Scotland and how terrible it was when all the businesses closed. That is the reality that this government and the federal government have faced. As we know, manufacturing went offshore and we are now trying to bring it back.

I want to acknowledge the comments of Hon Shelley Payne, particularly around Mandy Walker, who was an AgriFutures award winner. Congratulations to her.

Hon Darren West: Rural Women's Award.

Hon PETER FOSTER: Rural woman of the year, thank you very much.

I also acknowledge her comments about the work taking place out of Henderson. So many people are employed out of Henderson and we are so grateful that we have that industry right here in Western Australia.

I want to acknowledge the comments of Hon Jackie Jarvis. I thank her for outlining the government's response and reminding the chamber, as I have done, about the lack of policy and vision that we are currently facing from the Liberal–National opposition. Lastly, I also want to acknowledge the comments of Hon Ayor Makur Chuot. I thank her very much for her contribution in rising to speak in support of the motion. She highlighted the importance of investment into manufacturing and encouraging innovators in this space. Thank you.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.

DISALLOWANCE MOTIONS

Discharge of Order

Hon Lorna Harper reported that the concerns of the Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation had been addressed on the following disallowance motions, and on her motions without notice it was resolved —

That the following orders of the day be discharged from the notice paper —

1. Shire of Kent Bush Fire Brigades Local Law 2023.
2. Shire of Kent Public Places and Local Government Property Local Law 2023.

CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION AMENDMENT (PROTECTION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT ANIMALS) BILL 2023

Second Reading

Resumed from 8 May.

HON LORNA HARPER (East Metropolitan) [12.00 noon]: Thank you, and slight apologies as members get more of my dulcet tones—the quiet, shy person that I am. Carrying on from yesterday, I want to reflect a little on the discussions that we had about the protection of law enforcement animals. The Criminal Investigation Amendment (Protection of Law Enforcement Animals) Bill has been introduced with new offence provisions for assaulting, injuring or killing a law enforcement animal. The penalties will be commensurate with the penalties for assaulting a public officer. If a horse or a dog is killed, the penalty will be up to 10 years in jail, and if they are assaulted, it will be approximately seven years in jail.

As some of my colleagues have said, and as a dog lover, I really could not stand here and not have a very brief discussion about my dogs. They are not police dogs but, in fact, spaniels. They are so far from being police dogs it is not funny; they are pampered. Bailey is a Cavalier King Charles spaniel crossed with a springer spaniel. He is almost 15 years old. He is going blind and deaf and his hips are a wee bit dodgy, but he still runs around the park like he is a puppy. He can smell whatever he wants to and he loves nothing more than finding whatever food he possibly can around the house because he is a spaniel. Kobe is a Cavalier King Charles spaniel crossed with a cocker spaniel. He is jet black, almost 10 years old and likes nothing more than lying on the floor in the hallway in the dark, so we like to trip over him at night. Of course, you could say he is a law enforcement dog because if anybody ever broke into our house, they would trip over him.

As somebody who dearly loves dogs and is terrified of horses, I really am so thankful that we have brought in this bill that protects law enforcement animals. The horses and dogs that are members of the Western Australia Police Force will be given such great consideration and protection under these laws. Thank you.

HON SAMANTHA ROWE (East Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary) [12.03 pm]: It is my absolute pleasure to rise this afternoon and make a contribution on the Criminal Investigation Amendment (Protection of Law Enforcement Animals) Bill 2023. We have heard some great contributions so far. I think last night my colleague Hon Dan Caddy might have referred to this bill as an animal welfare —

Hon Dan Caddy interjected.

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: Of course, the member is a colleague and friend. I thought I heard him also refer to this bill as very important animal welfare legislation, and it is. I am thankful that our government and our Minister for Police has brought this bill forward because it will introduce new offence penalties and court-ordered restitution provisions for assaulting, injuring or killing a law enforcement animal. I cannot imagine that there is anyone in this chamber who would not agree with this legislation. The thought that an individual could harm a law enforcement animal, being either one of the Western Australian police dogs or horses, is really hard to imagine. It is hard to fathom what goes through the minds of an individual who would want to hurt, injure or, God forbid, kill one of these animals. At the end of the day, these animals not only are a specially trained resource for our police force, but also protect our police force, our frontline workers, and play such a significant role. To be able to protect them really is the least we can do.

I understand that this bill came about when the Western Australian Police Union put forward a submission to the previous Premier Mark McGowan to make sure that we would create an offence for assaulting a police animal. Yesterday and today, we have been given the chance to make some comments and put on the record our support for this important legislation. I think it was Hon Peter Collier when he rose yesterday to make a contribution who spoke about his excitement at receiving a pet palomino as a child. I must admit that as a young child, I would have loved a pet palomino.

Hon Kate Doust: You need to talk to your parents about that because something has hung over from that.

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: No, I do not need any therapy because I did not get a pet palomino. I actually have a huge respect and admiration for horses, but I am also somewhat a little terrified of horses after a riding accident when I was a teenager.

What I want to touch on this afternoon in my contribution is the fact that I had the pleasure of visiting the mounted police set-up in Maylands, I think it was back in July 2020, with the member for Belmont, Cassie Rowe. It was an incredible experience. I do not know whether other members have had the opportunity to see the horses, but it is incredible to see them in training and the amount of work that goes into making those horses ready to go onto the frontline. When the mounted police go down the street past my office in Belmont, quite a lot of buzz is created in the community. I think that people really respect the mounted police, as they should, for the work that they do, and being mounted also makes those police officers more approachable. I know that the residents and shop owners certainly feel like a greater sense of security is also provided.

I thought I might share an article with the house that was written in May 2020. It relates to how policing on horseback continues to be one of the most effective crime-fighting tools. It states —

Modern police have been quick to embrace technology, with body cameras recording arrests, computers able to pull up your details in seconds and drones equipped with lights and sirens flying around to monitor social distancing.

But an ancient method of policing has retained its place despite the march of technology.

The centuries-old police horse has re-emerged as an extremely effective crime-fighting tool, beyond just keeping the drunk and disorderly at bay.

That is to say, they're not just one-trick ponies.

“If you've got one horse, it's like having 10 coppers on the ground,” said Senior Sergeant Glen Potter, the head of Western Australia's Mounted Police section.

“I mean, there's no denying there is an intimidation factor there—if I need to break up a brawl, I can manoeuvre the horse into the brawl and separate it.

“People generally go, ‘wow, OK, a horse’ and they back off. It completely reduces the tension.”

...

Police horses are etched into the public memory for being both a point of stability and force in turbulent situations, keeping order at mass protests, riots and large-scale events.

But they are also regularly required in remote areas of the country for search and rescue operations.

“We can cover a lot of ground with less people and at great height. We can go through some pretty thick bush, we can see far ahead,” Senior Sergeant Potter said.

“We save ... significant amount of human resource and financial expense on a number of large searches where in the first hour, hour and a half, the team have located the missing person.”

But for Senior Sergeant Potter, who has been around horses his whole life, the true value of the mounted section lies in people's fascination with the animals.

"There's nothing like a horse to draw people in for discussion and to be remembered," he said.

"If you see a police vehicle driving down Rokeby Road ... you wouldn't think twice ... you wouldn't remember it.

"And that's the beauty of it. When people see horses and police officers on horses, they remember.

"If we put horses in a neighbourhood, we see a reduction in crime.

"It's consistent, and it lasts for a few days after we've left, which is a good thing.

"We actually make a point of talking to people when we're on horseback.

"They're a fantastic way of engaging with people, not just crooks, but also good people, the general public."

Senior Sergeant Potter said horses could bridge gaps with sections of the community that otherwise might not feel comfortable interacting with police.

"I've been on many jobs in the country with Indigenous people and quite often, suddenly they love the horse, and they want to come up and see the horse and touch the horse," he said.

"Then the kids come up, and it's just a great thing ... it's just wonderful. It really does break down barriers."

Finding the right horse for the job is a rare feat. It's a balancing act of the animal's temperament, size and stamina to work long, gruelling hours on the beat.

"People think 'my old horse, he'll be great police horse', but that's not the reality," Senior Sergeant Potter said.

"These are working horses—they're out on average for 10-hour days a week. Not any old horse can do that."

In scenes of chaos and danger, police horses usually cut a calm and composed figure.

But that placid —

Personality —

is not instinctive for a horse.

"Horses are naturally a flight animal, their response is to mostly get away from anything that's troubling them," Senior Sergeant Potter said.

"Something moving fast coming towards them—aggressive actions, commotion, loud noises—can be something that will spur a horse to go, 'I'm out of here'.

"You want a horse that is curious about what's going on, but not reactionary."

Training sessions involve desensitising horses to those provocative aspects of the job, which can involve mingling them with cattle.

"The horse realises, 'OK, I haven't seen a cow before, it's got big horns, what's it going to do to me?'" Senior Sergeant Potter said.

"Then they realise 'I can do something which will cause that animal to move away from me and make me feel more comfortable.'

"We allow them to feel confident in their environment, that they're not under threat. So then from cattle, we build to people."

Senior Sergeant Potter admitted it was a challenge for police handlers to not become too attached to their horses.

"You do get attached to them, there's no doubt about that," he said.

"But we are a working horse unit and we're required to place ourselves and, as a consequence, the horse into areas where they may be at risk.

"While we encourage a bond between the rider and the horse to care for them, we also have to expect that there are times when we have to place ourselves and our horse in danger.

"This horse is your work partner, but also, it's one of your work tools. It's no different from any other tool a police officer carries."

...

This week, WA's team of 20 horses and police officers were back on the streets after weeks of downtime due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"As tough as it's been for everyone, it has been a silver lining for the horses," Senior Sergeant Potter said.

“It was an opportunity to be actually retraining our horses while they’re here and also bringing on our new horse.”

As Australia’s nightlife slowly returns and people begin to feel comfortable congregating outside again, police horses will become much more visible to the average punter.

Senior Sergeant Potter said if people saw a horse patrolling the city streets, they should stop and say hello, but keep their wits about them.

“The key thing is, don’t touch the horse until you’ve asked permission,” he said.

“We’re not going to say no to touching the horses, but it’s where you touch them and how you touch them—horses generally don’t like to be patted.

“They’ll tolerate a stroke and only in certain areas, they don’t like that near their eyes or their muzzle—they have fantastic teeth and can bite.

“Listen to the officer who’s sitting on the horse. If the officers are dealing with someone just hang back until they’re finished.”

Senior Sergeant Potter will not be on horseback when it is back to business as usual as he is retiring after 43 years with the Force.

“I have no regrets. It’s been an interesting, exciting, adrenaline-filled career,” he said.

“There’s no doubt about it, riding horses is a hazardous occupation.

“But it comes with so many benefits—the freedom, exhilaration, and the bond you have with the horses.

“It’s just been brilliant, I’ve loved every minute.”

I have to say a huge thankyou to Senior Sergeant Glen Potter. He is the one who took us on our tour when we visited the mounted police in Maylands. It was such a wonderful opportunity to see those horses and the extensive training they have to go through to make sure that they are ready to go out to the frontline and work with our policemen and women, and also, of course, with the general public in so many ways.

That is one of the reasons I am so pleased to be able to stand and make a contribution this afternoon. This is very important legislation. We know that the police dogs, which I have not yet touched on as much in my contribution, play very important roles, whether it be in tracking and locating suspects or possibly detecting drugs in places, or on people as well, of course. Working dogs are a very important tool for policemen and women to have, and it is vital that we can protect them. Of course, our mounted police and police horses are used for targeted high-visibility patrols. As I have mentioned, whenever they go down one of the main streets in our communities, they are very much welcomed with open arms. They are also used in areas of high crowds and entertainment precincts, whether that might be in Northbridge in the nightlife entertainment district or in Fremantle, and also around really large-scale occasions and events such as New Year’s Eve. When we have big New Year’s Eve functions in the city, mounted police play a very important role. As mentioned in that article, they can also be used in response to land search-and-rescue incidents; out-of-control gatherings, parties or functions; and other public order incidents, including protests and demonstrations.

Unfortunately, over the years, we have seen people use violence against these law enforcement animals in an attempt to either avoid arrest or prevent police carrying out their lawful duties. There is currently no specific sanction for a person who assaults, injures or kills a law enforcement animal that is used by a police officer. This bill will create a two-limb offence provision. The first concerns assaulting, injuring or killing an animal used by an officer. The second concerns the assaulting, injuring or killing of an animal on account of it being an animal that is used, trained or maintained for use by officers. The penalty will be seven years’ imprisonment, with a summary conviction penalty of three years’ imprisonment and a fine of \$36 000.

Circumstances of aggravation will be punishable by 10 years’ imprisonment, as will killing an animal. The offences will not apply if a person has a reasonable excuse for assaulting, injuring or killing a law enforcement animal. An example of that might be actions by a vet who may have been called in to look at an animal or by animal trainers for the dogs and horses. It could also be a situation in which the accused acted in self-defence.

The bill provides for compensation orders to be made against a person who is convicted of assaulting, injuring or killing a law enforcement animal. Animals used by officers are of significant value to the state because of the work that they perform, as well as the resources that are invested in their training. Much time, money and effort goes into training animals to make sure that they are ready to protect and serve our Western Australia Police Force.

I looked through this bill the other day and it made me think about our own animals that we have throughout our lives. I do not currently have any pets; however, when we were growing up, we had a rescue pony—we did not have any palominos. The pony came from an animal shelter.

Hon Kate Doust: That’s enough. Now it’s coming out!

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: It was not a palomino! It was a rescue pony, and his day job during the Royal Melbourne Show was to be part of the animal nursery. We have a similar pavilion here at the Perth Royal Show. It is the pavilion where kids can go to pat and maybe feed the animals. Chester had his gig at the animal nursery at the Royal Melbourne Show then he would go back to his animal shelter, which I think may have been in Geelong. He was gifted to Cassie and me, primarily because Cassie loved horses and riding. I tried a couple of times; however, he was a very cranky old pony. It was good to have that experience to learn to ride as a young child growing up in Essendon and then Mount Macedon. My love of riding did not last as I had a riding accident while on holiday at Anglesea and I have not been able to get on a horse since.

We had a true working dog, not on our property, which was a Newfoundland called Bosun. For those who are not familiar with the breed, they come from Newfoundland in Canada. They are huge dogs. A male can weigh somewhere between 65 and 80 kilograms. They have webbed feet and a waterproof coat. They were often used on ships. They would go out with fishermen and would be used to either help pull in nets or rescue someone who went overboard. The Newfoundland would be thrown into the ocean and would help rescue anyone who had fallen overboard. When my husband Tom and I lived in Canada, we visited Newfoundland. After growing up with one, it was pretty special to see those majestic animals again after so long. They are still used to this day to help with search and rescue.

I think it is important—I know one of my colleagues might talk about the Mounties in Canada later, if she gets the chance—to recognise the great work that working horses and dogs provide in so many situations; however, this bill focuses primarily on law enforcement animals. It is important that we, as a government, put a piece of legislation in place that will protect them so they can continue to serve and play their role within the Western Australia Police Force. I am very pleased to put my support on the record and I am thankful that the Minister for Police has brought this forward so we can get this piece of legislation through. Thank you.

HON KATE DOUST (South Metropolitan) [12.25 pm]: I, like my colleagues, am pleased to make comments about the Criminal Investigation Amendment (Protection of Law Enforcement Animals) Bill 2023. First, I would like to thank our colleague across the way, Hon Peter Collier, the Leader of the Opposition, for giving what I regard as an outstanding and highly detailed account of the opposition's position in support of this bill and the extent of the detail he provided us. It makes it difficult to add a lot more, but I will try.

It was valuable to hear about his attachment to, and love of, animals—what a lucky boy he was to have a palomino! These changes are significant, not only for the animals involved, but also, certainly, for people who work with those animals. I imagine that a very strong bond is struck between the handler of a police dog or the rider of a police horse and their animals. I imagine that if that animal was faced with an attack or an animal was killed in the course of their work, it would be mortifying and tragic for that animal, and it would have a significant impact upon the person who worked with them.

We should regard animals used by the police in the course of their work as an extension of the police officer who handles the animal. In some ways that is why this legislation is important, because it recognises the role that those animals play in the work that is done by police on a day-to-day basis. Of course, dogs and horses are not necessarily used as an everyday option. I know from my own experience it is not uncommon to see police on horses through parts of south metro, particularly in some of the older suburbs where there are laneways people may scarp down following a house break and enter. Police can use the horses to get down some of the narrow spaces and pursue offenders.

I have predominantly seen horses used in Victoria Park, South Perth and Bentley over the past few years. They are always viewed with great appreciation by local people when they see them in action. It is the same with dogs. My colleague Hon Samantha Rowe referenced the significant work that dogs do in drug detection. I thought one of the important elements of this bill is that when a dog is injured or killed, the offender will not only be fined but also might have compensation amounts enforced.

I reference the speech provided by Hon Peter Collier yesterday and refer to the uncorrected *Hansard*. He articulated in part of his speech the very detailed process required to select a dog for this position or to choose an appropriate horse. It is not simply a case of pulling a German shepherd out of the flock and saying, "She will be right." The right animal must be found for the task. It must adhere to discipline, be a quick learner, obey instructions and perform as required. This is not the day to ask, but I imagine there is a significant amount of funds in the police budget allocated to the selection and training of each individual animal. I think it is a very sensible change. If somebody harms or kills a dog while it is performing its work, the police should be compensated to either re-train or find another animal to replace it. That would also send a very clear message to people who may contemplate that negative type of action that they will be held to account.

I had a look back to where some of this started. I understand that the canine section was formed in 1993 and that initially there were two police officers and two German shepherds. Because it was a new feature here in Western Australia, the training was provided in Trentham in New Zealand. That was seen to be the best training facility anywhere at that time. Upon the completion of that training, there was one general purpose and one narcotics detection dog. That was the basis of what we now have. Even at that early stage, it was found that the dogs were of great assistance to police on the streets. It also became apparent that the police would need to increase the number of dogs.

Since that time, the unit has grown. It has extended to 14 dogs: narcotics detection dogs; general purpose dogs; and dual purpose dogs, which have both narcotics and general purpose training. There is also a dedicated training unit. I am advised that most of the dogs are either German, Dutch or Belgian shepherds, or labradors that are suited to the demands of police work. These are quite specific breeds of dogs; I do not think my labradoodle would have made the cut! These dogs are highly skilled and capable for the roles that they perform.

The dogs are currently housed in Maylands; it was interesting to hear about Hon Samantha Rowe's visit there. Unfortunately, I have not had that opportunity.

Hon Samantha Rowe: It's worthwhile.

Hon KATE DOUST: I imagine it is worthwhile, yes. In early 2003, Hon Michelle Roberts, as the then Minister for Police, established dog units in the regions—dual purpose dogs in Broome, Geraldton and Kalgoorlie, and general purpose dogs in Bunbury. Those dogs were all brought back to the metropolitan area in 2021, but they can be diverted out to the regions as required.

Members have already talked about most of the common uses for police horses, including protests, demonstrations and other things. When I was in Madrid a few years ago, I went to a soccer match. There were 60 000 people exiting the stadium all at one time, and that was systematically and easily managed by mounted police. It was interesting to see how that process was applied to people management. I have not seen that happen here, but I am sure that if we had significant sporting events for which we needed to move people quickly and in a uniform manner, that is something that could be considered.

Historically, animals have been used in the military in wartime. I saw an interesting article today in *The Mandarin* about how certain military units now have dedicated medical staff to treat their animals when they are injured. I imagine that is the same with police dogs, because they are highly valued. They are part of the team and an extension of their individual handlers. They are highly prized and do a fantastic job. That is not a new thing here in Western Australia.

The Criminal Investigation Amendment (Protection of Law Enforcement Animals) Bill 2023 is similar to legislation that has been introduced in a variety of states to recognise the value of law enforcement animals and to acknowledge the increasing incidence of violence against them. There was reference in the second reading speech to an incident at a Melbourne demonstration against COVID-19 lockdowns in which someone attacked a horse with a flagpole. I am pretty sure we can all remember seeing that footage. It is pretty horrific for someone to sink so low as to want to cause harm to an animal that is there to assist the police. We have heard of cases in which dogs have been stabbed and kicked, and I think that is a pretty low effort. This legislation will put in place a raft of new, increased penalties, including jail terms, particularly in cases in which an animal is killed in the course of duty. I think that is a significant change and acknowledges the significance of these animals' service.

My colleague referenced my trip to Canada. I was fortunate enough to spend some time in Canada in 2014 with a group of other members; I am not too sure how many are left in this chamber. We spent three weeks visiting Parliaments in Saskatchewan and other jurisdictions. We also had an opportunity to join a member of Parliament to attend a variety of meetings. We were taken to a Royal Canadian Mounted Police—Mounties—training facility; I think it was the main training facility. I think it was in Saskatoon, because I know I was there for a couple of days. It was quite fascinating to see the training of the Mounty cadets and the facilities for their horse training. We are all familiar with the iconic image of the Mounties and their horses. Obviously, in that environment, they use horses much more frequently because of the nature of the territory they operate in. It was such an amazing setup, and amazing to see the relationship between the police officers and their animals.

Canada has enacted quite significant laws to enable better protection of police dogs. We visited the Alberta legislature in Edmonton, and harming a police dog or any other service animal is taken very seriously there. In October 2013—not long before our visit—there was an incident in which a German shepherd police dog called Quanto was stabbed to death while trying to apprehend a suspect who had fled in a car with stolen plates. As a result of that incident, the Canadian government introduced the Justice for Animals in Service Act, commonly known as “Quanto's Law”. I will go through some points about that legislation. The legislation was introduced to honour Quanto's service and sacrifice, and to recognise the risks taken on a daily basis by both police officers and their service animals. It extends specific protections to police dogs; animals trained to assist people with disabilities, such as guide dogs; and military animals aiding members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

I acknowledge that protections are already in place for animals used by prison and juvenile detention officers, and we are extending that protection under this legislation. It is similar to what the Canadians did in the earlier example. Under “Quanto's Law”, it is acknowledged that dogs are the animals most commonly trained to assist law enforcement officers and persons with disabilities. It also extends protections to police horses and other service animals. It specifically prohibits the killing or wounding of animals that have been trained and are being used to help law enforcement officers, persons with disabilities or the Canadian Armed Forces. It actually extends out a little further. The offence provisions are not at all dissimilar to what we will have. The law states that anyone who knowingly or recklessly poisons, injures or kills a law enforcement animal, including police dogs and horses,

could be subject to criminal charges. The maximum penalty for the offence is five years in prison. With this legislation, our maximum penalty will be 10 years. The scope of protection for police animals under that law, as I said, also applies to horses, and it covers the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Canada Border Services Agency and the Correctional Service Canada, which all use animals in their capacity, role and service. That was one example. They take the use of animals in those arrangements very seriously and would certainly have similar types of selection processes to those outlined in yesterday's debate.

We then look to New Zealand, which has also taken on board these types of changes. The Policing (Killing a Police Dog) Amendment Bill attempted to amend the Policing Act 2008 to increase the penalties for killing a police dog from a maximum of two years' imprisonment to a maximum of five years' imprisonment. Under the bill, anyone who intentionally killed, maimed, wounded or otherwise injured a police dog without lawful authority could face a penalty of up to two years in jail, a fine of up to \$15 000 or both. At that time, the penalty in New Zealand was viewed as lenient compared with other jurisdictions. A comparison was made to circumstances in the US, where the penalty for killing a police dog was up to 10 years' imprisonment, and in Canada, where it was up to five years' imprisonment. As I understand it, in South Australia at that point in time, it was five years' imprisonment.

The work of police dogs and police horses to enable police officers to do their job is something that we all highly respect, whether it be in drug detection, pursuing offenders, crowd management or any of the other roles. Using those animals can even be effective for the communication or promotion of the police service. It is a tough role and one in which significant investment is made. These dogs are highly valuable resources and need to be afforded that recognition and protection. Introducing this legislation to provide formal recognition of their service and value is a very positive change. I thank the government for making the decision to introduce this amending bill.

I note Hon Peter Collier's comments that perhaps it has taken some time, but as we all know in this place, we cannot always just add water to effect a change—certainly not when introducing legislation. The government has provided a very good piece of legislation. It is considered. It has tried to cover all the bases it needs to, to acknowledge the role and function of these animals in their service to the people of the state. It is trying to put in place modern penalties. Hopefully, it will also provide a deterrent to anyone who deliberately targets either a police dog or other animal that is providing that service or working in conjunction with the police. It will be a significant and positive change. I am sure that it will be welcomed by the officers in service with these animals. It will certainly be welcomed by our community and by people who absolutely love these animals.

While we are talking about these types of issues, which perhaps we do not talk about enough, one thing I might say is that we might want to think about how we deal with stolen pets. Colleagues talked about their pets, how attached they become and how they are part of their family. Sometimes we read stories about pets being stolen from properties and how devastating that is for families. Maybe that is something that we need to discuss and consider on another occasion. That is just a sideline thought.

I just wanted to say a few words. I think that this is a very important piece of legislation. It is a positive change, and I applaud the government for introducing this bill. I look forward to it passing through this house.

HON SHELLEY PAYNE (Agricultural) [12.44 pm]: It gives me great pleasure to stand and talk about this important piece of legislation. I echo the comments of Hon Samantha Rowe; we are introducing to the house a very important piece of animal welfare legislation. The Criminal Investigation Amendment (Protection of Law Enforcement Animals) Bill 2023 will amend the Criminal Investigation Act 2006, inserting a new offence for assaulting, injuring or killing a law enforcement animal.

This comes from a couple of recommendations. First of all, the WA Police Union's 2017 pre-election submission asked for harsher penalties for offenders found guilty of assaulting a police animal. Recommendations in the report of the 2018 statutory review of the Criminal Investigation Act also proposed that we reform this area.

Currently, section 17 of the Criminal Investigation Act authorises a police officer or other public officer exercising powers under the Criminal Investigation Act to use an animal to assist, providing the animal has been trained for that purpose and the animal is being used reasonably in the circumstances. The power to use animals under the Criminal Investigation Act is wideranging. It includes preventive and investigative powers, and provides for other matters, including the use of force and maintaining public order. The use of animals by police officers is also contemplated under the Misuse of Drugs Act and the Terrorism (Extraordinary Powers) Act.

Here in Western Australia, our police force trains and uses both dogs and horses for a number of purposes. Dogs are used primarily for tracking and locating suspects and for detecting drugs in places and on persons. Horses are used basically for targeted, high-visibility patrols in areas with high crowds; in entertainment precincts such as Northbridge and Fremantle, where we have all probably seen them when we have been downtown; and for occasions such as New Year's Eve. Police horses are also used for responding to land search-and-rescue incidents. We all saw horses used in the search for Cleo in the Carnarvon area. Horses are also used to control gatherings and other public order incidents, including protests and demonstrations.

The mounted section of the Western Australia Police Force has 18 officers, four support staff, 20 experienced patrol mounts and a number of young horses that are in training. The policing done by the mounted police in

Western Australia is quite a different style of policing from when it first began, way back in 1834. The mounted police are drawn from serving WA police officers. A particular emphasis is placed on officers who have frontline operational experience. Officers do not have to have experience with horseriding or horse handling, so any police officers out there who are really keen can still apply. If this is something that they want to do, they should go for it. All staff undergo a substantial riding course on joining the section, and regularly, every three months, they have to do further assessments. Mounted policing in Western Australia has emerged as an extremely relevant way of policing in the twenty-first century and offers a unique policing service throughout the state of Western Australia, which is, in fact, the largest policing district in the world. They deploy to metropolitan Perth and to regional WA, as far as Broome, the Kimberley, Kalgoorlie and the goldfields, and down to Albany.

Policing on a horse is quite unique in that it provides an officer with an excellent 360-degree view of their surroundings from a greater height than if they were standing or on a police bicycle. Added advantages are being able to manoeuvre the highly trained horse in confined areas and in crowds, and being able to cover ground really quickly. This provides the officer with a highly effective way of policing in a sometimes volatile and dangerous environment, which is why we understand that the horses get injured in some circumstances and why this legislation that we are introducing is really important.

Some of the roles that the mounted police do include responding to antisocial behaviour in Perth's nightspots, including, as I mentioned, Northbridge and the Perth CBD; conducting highly visible and targeted patrols throughout Western Australia; conducting searches for missing persons in areas such as the bush where officers are unable to effectively search on foot or in vehicles; conducting beach patrols at known trouble spots; conducting mobile responses to out-of-control gatherings; engaging in limited ceremonial duties, such as the Anzac Day parade, police recruit graduation parades; and providing VIP escorts. I mentioned the Anzac Day parade; I just wanted to do a shout-out to the light horse regiment down in Esperance. It is fantastic to have the horses in the parades on Anzac Day at Esperance.

Right now, there are 20 operational horses, with several younger horses at various levels of training with the WA Police Force. For members who are interested in the breeds used, the police prefer to use draught breeds for their stamina and temperament, such as Clydesdales, Clydesdale crosses and Percheron crosses. The type of work requires police officers to spend a long time in the saddle, and the working breeds are most suitable for this. The horses are sourced from Western Australia, where possible, through local advertising and referrals, but sometimes it is not possible to find suitable horses locally and we need to look to other states. The horses are kept in stables in the police complex at Maylands. The horses need to be less reactive in nature and able to withstand high-pressure situations that police officers find themselves in, so not all horses are suitable. They go through an extensive training program. Senior staff undertake the selection of the horses.

Just moving on to the purpose of the bill, offenders may use violence against law enforcement animals to avoid arrest or to prevent police from carrying out their lawful duties. For example, in 2019, an offender attempting to avoid arrest punched a police dog in the head. According to WA police, there have been over 34 recorded assault incidents involving law enforcement animals since 2015. Police dogs are often assaulted in the course of assisting officers. Currently, there is no specific sanction for a person who assaults, injures or generally uses violence against an animal used by a police officer in the lawful exercise of their duties and, therefore, we are introducing this legislation into the house. I think I will just leave it there and commend the government for bringing these important changes in the legislation to protect working horses and dogs.

HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Emergency Services) [12.53 pm] — in reply: I thank all those honourable members who made a contribution to this debate so far, including Hon Peter Collier. I thank him for his extensive contribution on the Criminal Investigation Amendment (Protection of Law Enforcement Animals) Bill 2023 and for his indication that this bill is being supported by the opposition.

I also acknowledge the contributions made by Hon Samantha Rowe, Hon Kate Doust, Hon Lorna Harper, Hon Dan Caddy and Hon Shelley Payne. I thank them, too, for their contributions. It has been very interesting and enlightening to learn about people's interactions with horses. Indeed, who knew that Hon Samantha Rowe had Chester the pony in her younger years? It was great to hear about not only those honourable members' support for the bill but also their love of animals.

In the contribution that was made by Hon Peter Collier, he asked me a number of questions. I propose to answer those now. He asked about the number of reported assaults or incidents involving police animals. I am advised that since January 2015, there have been 34 assaults or incidents involving police animals. This is two more than the 32 incidents that were previously referred to. He also asked how many dogs and horses are owned by WA Police Force. I am told that the latest information is 26 dogs and 15 horses. There was a further question about whether there was any intention to increase the number of dogs and horses. I am told that the WA Police Force is always looking at opportunities to improve and build on the capabilities of the dog squad and the mounted section.

There was a further question about which states or territories have legislated for offences relating to killing or injuring animals. They are the Northern Territory, New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania and South Australia. They have all legislated for offences relating to killing or injuring animals used in law enforcement. Hon Peter Collier

asked about Victoria in particular and whether any offences have been introduced in Victoria. I am told offences specific to assaulting law enforcement animals have not been introduced in Victoria. WA Police Force is not aware of any plans in Victoria to introduce such offences.

I was asked whether police animals are stationed in regional areas or when they are used in regional areas. I am advised the canine section and the mounted section regularly receive requests for the deployment of animals to regional areas. The deployment of horses and dogs to regional areas can be in response to a specific incident—for example, horses assisting with land searches for missing people in the regions. However, resources may be deployed to assist regional areas in providing a proactive response to crime; for example, narcotics dogs can be deployed to regional areas to assist with investigations under the Misuse of Drugs Act.

There was a question on the Corruption and Crime Commission's *A report on the deployment of police dogs* and in particular recommendation 1 of the CCC report. I gave an answer yesterday that said training components are anticipated to be completed by July 2024. Recommendation 1 of the CCC report was —

Develop and implement WA Police Canine Unit Policy, Procedure and/or Guidelines.

That work has been completed and on 20 March 2024, WA Police Force representatives met with CCC representatives and briefed them on the completion of the work. However, on its own initiative, the WA Police Force has expanded on the work to be done in response to recommendation 1 by conducting a broader holistic review of all facets of the canine section, and one facet was a thorough review of training. Key milestones in respect to finalising the review of training are expected to be reached by January 2025. That said, work to ensure that training is kept up to date will remain a constant ongoing project.

They are all the questions that were asked of me. I again thank honourable members for making their contribution and 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

Bill read a third time, on motion by **Hon Stephen Dawson (Minister for Emergency Services)**, and passed.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm

ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE

Tabling of Budget Papers

Hon Stephen Dawson (Minister for Emergency Services) tabled the budget papers.

[See paper 3131A–E.]

Consideration of Tabled Papers

HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Emergency Services) [2.01 pm] — without notice: I move —

That pursuant to standing order 69(1), the Legislative Council take note of tabled papers 3131A–E (2024–25 budget papers) laid upon the table of the house on Thursday, 9 May 2024.

[The Minister for Emergency Services read the following speech.]

INTRODUCTION

President, I rise to present the eighth Budget of our WA Labor Government.

This Budget invests to create more jobs into the future and diversify our economy; invests like never before in key services; and delivers cost of living support to all Western Australians across the State, at a time when it is most needed.

Western Australia's economy has defied predictions.

People are moving to Western Australia like no other time in our history.

This year alone, Western Australia's population increased by a record 94,000 people, the equivalent of the population of Bunbury and Karratha combined.

Managing our extraordinary economy, and the population growth that fuels it, undoubtedly brings with it opportunities and pressures, including additional demand for housing, health, and education services.

This Budget makes additional investments to address these demands.

We have also boosted our cost-of-living support for Western Australian households and businesses.

We are investing in infrastructure that will shape our State for decades to come.

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY

President, since 2017, more than 300,000 jobs have been created in Western Australia. The current unemployment rate of 3.4 per cent remains at historically low levels.

In fact, the unemployment rate has remained at or below 4 per cent for 29 of the past 30 months, the longest sustained period of low unemployment since 2009.

Western Australia's domestic economy grew by 4.7 per cent in 2023, more than twice the growth of the national economy.

Treasury forecasts our domestic economy will grow by 5.25 per cent this financial year, well above the long-run average.

As the economy has grown, business confidence has grown with it.

Business investment is expected to grow by more than 13 per cent this year, the highest growth in more than a decade.

Government investment is expected to grow by 10 per cent this financial year, underpinned by our record \$10.6 billion infrastructure spend in 2023–24 alone.

Our \$42.4 billion investment in infrastructure over the next four years will continue to drive our economic expansion and meet the needs of our growing population.

President, one of the most important economic signs for working families is this:

Wages are going up, and inflation is easing.

Wages grew by 4.4 per cent in 2023, the highest annual average growth rate in the nation, and more than double the decade average.

STATE FINANCES

President, Western Australia is on track to deliver a sixth consecutive operating surplus in 2023–24 at \$3.2 billion.

For 2024–25, Western Australia is forecast to achieve a \$2.6 billion operating surplus, with operating surpluses to be maintained across the forward estimates.

This achievement is despite ongoing volatility in our revenue base through fluctuations in commodity prices, taxation revenue, the GST, and other Commonwealth grants.

For these reasons we continue to budget conservatively and ensure we live within our means. It is why we continue to fight every day to ensure Western Australia gets its fair share of the GST and other Commonwealth grants, recognising no State provides more to the Federation than ours.

This Budget uses our strong financial position to invest in the things that matter to Western Australians.

Highlights in this Budget include:

- \$762 million to deliver record cost of living support to Western Australian families;
- \$1.1 billion for housing and homelessness, focused on boosting housing supply and affordability;
- a record \$3.2 billion boost for our health system, supporting more doctors and nurses across Western Australia;
- \$1.3 billion for education and training, including more teachers and education assistants, and new and upgraded schools to keep pace with our growing population; and
- \$1.8 billion to diversify and decarbonise our economy, driving Western Australia's energy transition and the jobs of the future.

Consistent operating surpluses have allowed us to fund infrastructure that will benefit Western Australians for decades to come.

At the same time, net debt remains over \$15 billion lower than projected under the former Liberal National Government.

Net debt is expected to be lower than originally budgeted this year at \$28.6 billion by 30 June 2024, compared to the \$29.4 billion estimated at the 2023–24 Budget.

Net debt as a percentage of Gross State Product is expected to be just 9.7 per cent by 2027–28, unchanged from the forecast in the last Budget, and significantly lower than any other jurisdiction.

COST OF LIVING SUPPORT

President, while the economy remains strong, and employment is at an all-time high, we understand cost of living pressures on working families.

That's why the Cook Labor Government is delivering \$762 million in new cost of living support measures in this Budget.

The initiatives will help Western Australian households and small businesses through the current cycle of higher costs.

This Budget's cost of living support builds on prior measures and brings the total assistance provided to over \$3.5 billion since we came to Government.

As I speak, our WA Student Assistance Payment is supporting Western Australian families.

Around 170,000 Western Australian families have now claimed the payments of \$250 per high school student, and \$150 per primary and kindergarten student.

In addition, earlier this year, we made public transport free for school students, saving a family with two kids around \$560 per year.

And in regional WA, we have more than doubled the transport allowance for students who cannot access a free orange school bus, the biggest increase in two decades.

Further to that, we are adding \$65 million to extend our Regional Airfare Zone Cap. This Australia-first initiative, introduced by our Labor Government, has already delivered more than 250,000 capped regional airfares, saving regional residents hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars per year.

Additionally, this year we are increasing the Regional Pensioner Travel Card by \$100 to \$675, to support pensioners in regional WA with the cost of transport.

President, these initiatives will make a huge difference.

This Budget delivers a Household Electricity Credit of \$400 to more than 1.1 million Western Australian households.

Importantly, the electricity credit will also be extended to more than 90,000 small businesses to help hard working Western Australians with the costs of running their business.

The combination of cost-of-living measures means an everyday family with two school-aged children will receive more than \$1,400 in State Government assistance this year alone.

But President, we know some households do it tougher.

That's why more than \$3,500 in targeted assistance is available for households with eligible concessions. This includes, for example, the \$334 Energy Assistance Payment, that will be provided to around 330,000 households on top of the \$400 electricity credit.

This will be the fifth Budget that the Government has limited increases in household fees and charges to below inflation.

In fact, for the third time during this period, the basket of household fees and charges will actually decline in 2024–25, with a 2 per cent, or \$124, reduction.

Significantly, households will spend around \$140 less this year on State Government fees and charges than they did six years ago in 2018–19.

In line with our commitment at the last election, electricity, public transport, and water prices will rise by less than inflation.

This Budget well and truly delivers cost of living support to all Western Australians, delivering extra support to those who need it most.

HEALTH

President, in this Budget, we are continuing our major investment in the Western Australian health and mental health system:

- with a record \$3.2 billion to boost system capacity;
- by investing in more nurses and doctors; and
- improving access to quality care for patients across the State.

Since June 2017, we've increased the health workforce by over 4,400 nurses and 1,800 doctors, an increase of almost 35 per cent.

We will spend \$12.8 billion in 2024–25 alone; up 45 per cent since 2017.

We have the best funded hospital system of any State, with the highest per capita spending on hospitals, 14 per cent above the national average.

In this term of Government alone, we have delivered 709 new beds.

A further 550 hospital beds are set to be delivered, not including those in the new Women and Babies Hospital in Murdoch.

Our health system is normalising following the significant disruption of the pandemic.

Ambulance ramping is easing, and elective surgery wait times are down 31 per cent since they peaked in the pandemic.

Things are moving in the right direction.

To keep it going, this Budget includes a further \$1.2 billion for our public hospital services to meet the growing demand in Western Australia.

As part of our reform plan, we are committing a further \$155 million to improve emergency access and reduce ambulance ramping, bringing our commitment to emergency department reforms in this term of Government alone to \$827 million.

A further \$405 million will be spent on health services in the regions, including funding for regional workforce initiatives, priority programs, like the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme, and the Kimberley Ambulance Service.

We will invest an additional \$260 million on mental health and alcohol and other drug initiatives, including further investment in suicide prevention and mental health hospital services.

Our new commitment to health and mental health includes \$61 million to build on our previous responses to the recommendations of the Infants, Children and Adolescents Mental Health Taskforce.

This includes more Acute Care Response Teams, and extending the Crisis Connect service, providing a rapid response to support young people in crisis.

Importantly, we are reforming our health and mental health systems to meet the changing needs of our growing population.

We also understand the incredible demand for Child Development Services in the community.

That's why in this Budget, we're also significantly expanding these services, with an additional \$39 million for more staff to provide an increase in assessment and intervention services.

This Budget also includes a further \$839 million in health infrastructure, with funding for the next stage of the roll-out of the Electronic Medical Record and Critical Health ICT infrastructure programs.

An additional \$173 million has been committed to the redevelopment of Bunbury Hospital, plus \$15 million to deliver an MRI unit at Hedland Health Campus, and close to \$9 million to expand Child Development Services in regional WA.

Meanwhile, we continue to roll out major upgrades to hospitals across the State, including at the Geraldton Health Campus, as well as redevelopment of the Peel Health Campus, with services on track to return to public hands in August, and redevelopment enabling works set to commence later this year.

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

President, this Budget delivers a massive \$1.1 billion for housing and homelessness-related initiatives.

A further \$400 million is being invested in the expanded Social and Affordable Housing Investment Fund, taking our total investment in the Fund to \$1.6 billion.

In this term of Government, we have now funded almost 5,000 additional social homes, with more than 2,100 homes already delivered.

The new investment will help support a pipeline of affordable multi-residential housing across a range of high priority sites, including METRONET precincts.

We will partner with the Commonwealth through Housing Australia, and the community housing sector to build hundreds of new affordable rental homes in the coming years.

In addition, this Budget includes \$144 million to deliver new social and affordable residential apartments across Western Australia, including the Pier Street project in Perth.

We are also providing a \$179 million boost to maintain the State's portfolio of around 45,000 social houses, key worker and Aboriginal housing.

Our Government continues to make significant investments in regional housing.

Grants totalling \$60 million will be delivered to regional community housing providers for new and refurbished housing, while \$25 million is being provisioned to improve the energy performance of housing in Aboriginal communities.

A further \$35 million is being provided to deliver additional development-ready land in Broome, Karratha, and Kalgoorlie, and \$9 million to boost homelessness services in regional WA.

An additional \$44 million has been invested in Government Regional Officer Housing, plus a further \$6 million to extend the freeze on tenant rents.

We know that growing the supply of labour is critical to delivering more housing.

That's why this Budget includes an \$85 million boost to the capacity of our residential construction workforce.

This includes an additional 150 apprenticeships in group training organisations to increase the number of carpenters, bricklayers, plumbers, and electricians to build our homes.

This is on top of the 150 places already taken up since January this year.

President, we know we need to explore all avenues to increase housing supply.

That's why we introduced a \$10,000 payment to convert short-term holiday rentals to the long-term rental market, with around 140 released as a result of this scheme in the first six months.

To build on this, we are introducing a new scheme to further increase the availability of long-term rentals. \$5 million has been allocated for grants of \$5,000 for owners of vacant homes who place them on the long-term rental market.

President, we know that the increase in the average house price means fewer Western Australians have been eligible for stamp duty assistance for their first home.

This Budget will increase assistance to those buying their first home, including those who are currently renting.

This Budget delivers \$82 million to increase the first home owner transfer duty exemption and concession thresholds to \$450,000 and \$600,000 respectively. This will assist almost 5,000 first home buyers per year and increase the maximum duty relief under the concession to over \$15,000.

Our WA Rent Relief Program, delivered in partnership with community service organisations, continues to support those experiencing financial stress due to higher rents, with more than \$2.4 million already provided to almost 600 Western Australians to help keep a roof over their heads.

This Budget also provides a further \$92 million to support critical homelessness services delivered by more than 120 providers, as well as case management and wrap-around support for rough sleepers to transition into permanent accommodation.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

President, we're improving the education and training system on several fronts, more teachers, more schools, and affordable training, including Fee Free TAFE.

We've added more than 6,000 new teachers and education assistants to public schools across Western Australia since 2017.

This Budget delivers a record \$1.3 billion investment in education and training to meet the needs of our rapidly growing population and economy.

In fact, almost \$34 billion will be spent on education and training over the next four years, plus more than \$1.7 billion on new school and training infrastructure.

\$410 million will be spent to build new schools, expand capacity, and upgrade and maintain existing schools.

A further \$391 million will be invested to meet projected enrolment growth for schools, as well as support students with English as an additional language and students with disability.

Importantly, a new feature of this Budget is a further \$3 million to bolster swimming and water safety programs in Western Australia.

Nearly 40,000 Western Australians have accessed Fee Free TAFE over the past year, giving more Western Australians the skills they need for the jobs that support our economy and community.

Western Australians who wanted to become Early Childhood Educators had to pay almost \$7,000 under the Liberals and Nationals.

Today, they pay nothing under WA Labor.

Western Australians who wanted to become Enrolled Nurses had to pay almost \$10,500 under the Liberals and Nationals.

Today, they pay nothing under WA Labor.

In this Budget, an additional \$195 million will be invested in our training system, including:

- as previously mentioned, \$85 million to train more tradies to build more homes; and
- funding to continue the Government's Fee Free TAFE places in 2025, ensuring everyone, no matter their income, has access to training.

And in this Budget, we are expanding the Heavy Vehicle Driver Training Program to the regions, as part of our overall investment of \$1.1 billion for training in regional WA.

METRONET AND TRANSPORT

President, since being elected in 2017, we have rolled out METRONET across our suburbs.

Over the past year, we have opened Lakelands Station and the New Bayswater Station, following the delivery of the Forrestfield Airport Link, the METRONET Railcar Facility, the Mandurah Multi-Storey Car Park, and the Denny Avenue Level Crossing Removal.

And importantly, after a former Liberal National Government shut down the industry in the early 1990s, we've brought railcar manufacturing back to Western Australia.

Right now, the first locally made train in over thirty years is carrying passengers on our Joondalup and Mandurah lines.

\$2.7 billion will be invested in METRONET in 2024–25, which will see the completion of the commitments we made at the 2017 election, including:

- the Yanchep Rail Extension;
- the Morley–Ellenbrook Line;
- the Byford Rail Extension;
- the Victoria Park–Canning Level Crossing Removal program; and
- the Thornlie–Cockburn Link.

From reopening the Fremantle Line, to building the Joondalup and Mandurah Lines, to now delivering METRONET, affordable, high-quality public transport is in Labor's DNA.

Our commitment to capped fares, free student travel, and free travel on Sundays means there is no other place in Australia where people living in the suburbs have access to high-quality public transport at such an affordable rate.

SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES

President, this Budget continues our Government's track record of investment in programs and reform that support the most vulnerable in our community, and improve community safety.

We are spending a further \$96 million on initiatives to prevent family and domestic violence, bringing our investment to \$422 million in this term of Government.

Since 2020–21, we have supported an extra 58 refuge beds for women fleeing violence in the home, with a further 77 beds to come.

An additional \$54 million will expand our interagency Family and Domestic Violence Response teams. Support will be extended to seven days a week, with a focus on early intervention to keep victim survivors safe.

We are delivering an additional \$88 million for child protection initiatives. This includes more than \$46 million to expand access to the Home Stretch WA program to support young people leaving out-of-home care.

\$16 million is being committed to the 10 year Early Years Partnership, with a further \$19 million from the Minderoo Foundation. The Partnership will improve early childhood learning, intervention, and support for families in four Western Australian communities, Armadale West, Central Great Southern, Bidyadanga, and Derby.

This Budget also includes:

- \$70 million towards reforms that improve fairness, advocacy and services for people with mental impairment in our justice system, while ensuring the safety of our community;
- \$16 million for youth justice programs that provide targeted early intervention and intensive support for at-risk young people, including alternatives to detention; and
- \$23 million to extend the successful Operation Regional Shield, to allow WA Police to rapidly deploy officers to the regional areas where they are needed most.

A further \$17 million has been allocated to support our Government's landmark firearms reforms.

This includes funding for the development of a new Firearms Licensing and Registry System.

It also includes additional resourcing to manage the voluntary buyback scheme currently underway, which has already taken thousands of guns off our streets, making our community safer.

Since 2017, we've increased our police workforce by an additional 604 officers, and we have a record number of recruits going through our academy right now.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

President, this Budget delivers \$72 million to bolster emergency services and protect the Western Australian community.

This includes funding for an additional 60 career firefighters as part of the biggest boost to frontline emergency services in Western Australia in more than 50 years.

A further \$9 million will support Western Australia's vitally important volunteer bushfire brigades, including equipment upgrades, and funding for Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service stations in the South West.

In addition, this Budget includes more funding for the Emergency Rescue Helicopter Service and Critical Care Paramedic contracts, and the Air Operation Fleet to ensure the safety of Western Australians during emergencies.

A further \$30 million will be provided to boost bushfire mitigation and frontline resources at key priority locations across the State. This includes 34 additional firefighting and fire management staff, and an extra eight fire trucks.

OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

President, this Government continues to deliver on our vision to create five million hectares of new conservation estate under the Plan for Our Parks, with a further \$73 million to continue these efforts in partnership with Traditional Owners.

We are protecting our native forests for generations to come, investing in sustainable tourism and outdoor adventure projects.

We are investing \$67 million in the ten-year Forest Management Plan, that will support forest monitoring, create new jobs, and work with Traditional Owners to protect native wildlife and forest health.

And we are investing \$46 million in new hiking and cycle trails and \$17 million in new and upgraded camping facilities across the State as part of our Outdoor Adventure Tourism Package.

DIVERSIFYING AND DECARBONISING OUR ECONOMY

President, this Budget delivers an additional \$1.8 billion to further diversify and decarbonise our economy, increasing our investment to \$11.2 billion in this term of Government.

To fuel economic growth into the future, we are:

- supporting the decarbonisation of our economy and our trading partners;
- making our Strategic Industrial Areas ready for projects in new and emerging industries like critical minerals and hydrogen;
- investing in economic infrastructure, including desalination plants, transmission infrastructure, ports, road, and rail;
- undertaking economic reform, including streamlining government approvals, to attract new investment;
- investing in tourism and the creative industries like never before; and
- building capacity in science, innovation, and technology to improve the competitiveness of our industries.

Climate Change and Decarbonisation

We're closing our coal fired power plants by 2030 and moving to cleaner, more reliable and affordable energy.

To enable more uptake of renewables, we're overhauling the South West grid.

We previously committed over \$4 billion to the grid to expand generation, transmission, and storage infrastructure.

This Budget provides a further \$324 million for planning and to procure long lead items for network infrastructure.

A further \$148 million has been committed towards the North West grid that will help our energy-intensive resources sector to transition to more renewables.

But we're not just thinking about our backyard, we also have the resources to help our trading partners' shift to clean energy.

With vast quantities of the critical minerals required to decarbonise, Western Australia will play a central role in the global transition to net zero.

Strategic Industrial Areas

Strategic Industrial Areas will be a key element.

Our industrial land will host projects that enable us to process the minerals we extract.

We are achieving more downstream processing. We can also manufacture more products that will contribute to the world's energy transition.

This Budget delivers a new Strategic Industries Fund valued at \$500 million to ensure these areas are project-ready for new investment.

Economic Infrastructure

In a State like Western Australia, delivering economic infrastructure is fundamental to our continued prosperity.

Our ports play a key role in our economy. This Budget invests a further \$373 million in our ports from the Kimberley all the way to Esperance. These investments include the delivery of the Dampier Bulk Handling Facility and Lumsden Point.

Meanwhile, Westport is moving ahead, delivering a larger, more efficient container port in Kwinana, with dedicated rail and road links to help move freight around our State. A further \$116 million is included in this Budget to continue planning, including provisioning for the early marine, civil and road works.

Our Government continues to roll out investment to support the more efficient movement of grain through the Agricultural Supply Chain Improvement Program.

And President, WA Labor is delivering major road projects in regional WA that will improve productivity, regional growth, and liveability for local communities.

Projects like the Bunbury Outer Ring Road and the Albany Ring Road will support economic growth, reduce travel times for freight and take trucks off local roads.

Over 7,500 kilometres of our regional roads have been made safer through our investment in the Regional Road Safety Program, and we will continue to roll out those life-saving improvements through a \$107 million investment in this Budget.

Meanwhile, our investment in Great Northern Highway in the Kimberley and Pilbara, including \$107 million to replace the Brooking Channel Bridge and other investments, are making it safer for truck drivers and the general community.

In addition, \$29 million has been committed to upgrading airstrips in Carnarvon, Onslow, Eucla, Albany, the East Kimberley, and in remote Aboriginal communities.

In our drying climate, we are taking significant steps to ensure the ongoing supply of water across regional Western Australia.

\$15 million has been allocated towards planning for future water supply to the Goldfields.

Early works have also commenced in Alkimos on Perth's third desalination plant.

The \$2.8 billion facility will help secure water supply for the Western Australian community for generations to come.

Economic Reform

Our Government is also making it easier to do business in Western Australia, slashing red tape to unlock job-creating projects.

Late last year, the Premier announced an overhaul of Western Australia's environmental approvals system, building on the nation-leading reforms we've made to our planning system.

This Budget includes \$36 million to facilitate those reforms to help drive the projects of the future, while protecting our environment.

Tourism and Creative Industries

President, this Budget includes \$165 million for a new Outdoor Adventure Tourism Package, including creating and upgrading key boating, camping, and fishing facilities across the State.

A record \$150 million is committed to ensure we have the staff accommodation and infrastructure to allow Rottnest to reach its full potential.

To further progress Western Australia's tourism potential, we'll continue to focus on creating a nationally significant events calendar.

And in this Budget, we see further funding for our Screen Production Facility in Malaga.

An additional \$13 million toward our Screen Industry Strategy, which is focused on developing the skills required for the productions that will be made in our new facility.

We've also increased funding for arts organisations to support their role in nurturing Western Australian talent and supporting future productions.

Science and Innovation

President, Western Australia has an extensive history of scientific and medical advancement.

Our vast space and our dark skies make us attractive to those looking to the stars, with the Mid West housing the globally significant Square Kilometre Array. Another \$10 million is allocated to help grow our space industry.

This Budget also includes \$16 million to support innovation by industry, including to open a Founders Factory in Western Australia to support entrepreneurs and start-ups to commercialise new technologies.

REGIONAL WA

President, our dedicated cost of living initiatives, like the increase to the Regional Pensioner Travel Card, and the extension of our Regional Airfare Zone Cap, highlight our commitment to regional communities.

We continue to support Royalties for Regions, with \$4 billion allocated in this Budget.

And a record \$12.8 billion is being invested in regional infrastructure, and billions more in regional service delivery over the next four years.

CONCLUSION

President, this Budget continues to drive our State's economic momentum.

This eighth Budget of the WA Labor Government delivers on our commitment to the people of Western Australia in 2017 and 2021.

A commitment to:

- manage the finances responsibly;
- create more jobs and a strong economy; and
- improve services and infrastructure right across Western Australia.

And despite the global challenges we have faced, our State is much stronger today than it was seven years ago.

This Budget sets Western Australia up for future generations; and makes sure our State continues to be the envy of the nation.

President, I commend the Budget to the House.

Consideration of the papers made an order of the day for the next sitting, on motion by **Hon Colin de Grussa (Deputy Leader of the Opposition)**.

HEALTH PRACTITIONER REGULATION NATIONAL LAW APPLICATION BILL 2023

Second Reading

Resumed from 7 May.

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House) [2.35 pm] — in reply: My second reading reply on the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Application Bill 2023 was interrupted on Tuesday when I ended by advising the house about one of the modifications made in part 3 to remove the limitation period for serious offences under the national law, enabling better protection for the WA public so that serious offenders can be appropriately punished for their offending. That includes not just offences that occurred within the previous 12 months. That modification will also ensure that WA will be in line with other jurisdictions with limited periods for these offences.

As I indicated when we finished on Tuesday night, I had some further information on the matters raised by Hon Dr Brian Walker in his contribution to the second reading debate. He claimed that the body overseeing the national scheme, the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, is not subject to any oversight and is not held accountable. However, the very reason we are here today, right now, is to implement reforms that arose out of extensive independent reviews. AHPRA has also appeared before numerous federal and state inquiries to report on its regulatory work. The National Health Practitioner Ombudsman is appointed by health ministers to review complaints about AHPRA and the boards. The ombudsman would be a more appropriate avenue for Hon Dr Brian Walker to raise any concerns he might have.

Regarding the protection of health professionals, an expert advisory group was established in 2021 to examine the issue of practitioner distress during regulatory processes, and 15 recommendations are being implemented to improve this area. At the end of the day, AHPRA is an administrative body and decisions regarding disciplinary actions such as suspension or the cancellation of registration are made by boards comprising qualified practitioners in the relevant field. Since 2019, AHPRA has employed clinical advisers in each of the professional areas regulated to advise on notifications.

Hon Dr Brian Walker suggesting that free thinking is prohibited. I am advised that it is not. But given the potentially drastic consequences that free thinking might have on the health of the public, that free thinking is rightfully subject to peer review.

I again want to thank all members for their contributions to the bill and I commend it to the house.

Division

Question put and a division taken, the Deputy President casting his vote with the ayes, with the following result —

Ayes (29)

Hon Martin Aldridge	Hon Sue Ellery	Hon Shelley Payne	Hon Neil Thomson
Hon Klara Andric	Hon Donna Faragher	Hon Stephen Pratt	Hon Wilson Tucker
Hon Dan Caddy	Hon Nick Goiran	Hon Martin Pritchard	Hon Darren West
Hon Sandra Carr	Hon Jackie Jarvis	Hon Samantha Rowe	Hon Pierre Yang
Hon Ben Dawkins	Hon Louise Kingston	Hon Rosie Sahanna	Hon Peter Foster (<i>Teller</i>)
Hon Stephen Dawson	Hon Ayor Makur Chuot	Hon Matthew Swinbourn	
Hon Colin de Grussa	Hon Steve Martin	Hon Dr Sally Talbot	
Hon Kate Doust	Hon Kyle McGinn	Hon Dr Steve Thomas	

Noes (1)

Hon Dr Brian Walker (*Teller*)

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

[Leave granted to proceed forthwith to third reading.]

Third Reading

Bill read a third time, on motion by **Hon Sue Ellery (Leader of the House)**, and passed.

LAND TAX ASSESSMENT AMENDMENT (BUILD-TO-RENT) BILL 2023

Second Reading

Resumed from 12 October 2023.

HON NEIL THOMSON (Mining and Pastoral) [2.43 pm]: I want to speak briefly on the Land Tax Assessment Amendment (Build-to-Rent) Bill 2023. The opposition supports the bill. We have a housing crisis in Western Australia—a crisis of the government’s own making. We have seen an irresponsible investment cycle, a massive drain on the construction sector and a further blowout in the Metronet budget. When is it going to end—seriously? People in the construction sector, and the apartment sector in particular, say that it is hard to get contractors. We know that the cost of building apartments is a serious challenge. Obviously, this bill comes under the finance portfolio, but the Minister for Housing is grappling at all the levers. It is like watching a cartoon of the minister grappling in the dark with every lever he can because he realises that we are in a serious situation in Western Australia. Rents for apartment are up by 22 per cent from the last financial year, and they continue to escalate.

I am going to speak briefly on the bill because I know that my colleague Hon Steve Martin has some comments to make. The rent-to-build market is not a major market here in Western Australia because it is a very difficult market. The Property Council of Australia has told me that apartments cannot be delivered for under \$650 000. That is a huge cost for a builder. With the cost of building apartments, we know that the densification around the Metronet stations will be very hard to achieve.

The main focus of this reform is outlined in proposed section 39F in clause 5 of the bill. The proposal is for a 50 per cent reduction in land tax. The problem with land tax is that it is a tiny component. It is based on the assessable value of land. As an example, most of the units in a 100-apartment complex would be owned by either individuals or investors. Often, the cumulative land valuation would be below the \$300 000 threshold and that would mean that they would not pay any land tax. It is likely that in a 100-unit complex, only 10 or 20 per cent of the apartments would be subject to land tax. In the current market, someone who owns a unit and rents it out would not pay land tax, unless they own several units, and the unimproved value would be only about \$50 000 or so a unit.

Who is going to invest in this? I doubt very much that we are going to see a rush. Real estate investment trusts are relied on to do these developments. It is something that does not occur. I am using a real example of a 100-unit

complex with an unimproved value of about \$7.5 million, so the total land tax would be about \$116 000 a year. For a 100-unit complex, that would work out to be about \$12 a week. That is the total land tax. We are talking about a saving of \$6 a week. If all the apartments in a 100-unit complex were worth \$650 000, that would work out to be \$65 million. At six per cent, the figures do not add up. If a developer builds a greenfield development today with units worth \$650 000 and then has to make the required administration fund payments, including for cleaning, maintenance and management, that could be about \$600 000 a year. Again, these are the numbers from the industry. Money needs to be put into the reserve fund as well to pay for major upgrades when the lifts break down and they have to be repaired or bits fall off the building. That can be up to \$1 million a year for a 100-unit apartment complex. The problem is that apartments do not add up in Western Australia at the moment because of the huge cost of construction. The costs, including interest, operational costs, the admin fund and the reserve fund, could add up to around \$1 000 a week for each unit. This is the problem, yet here we are offering a \$6 a week saving. I just cannot see this having an impact.

I think we have a serious problem in Western Australia. The government needs to get to the heart of the problem of construction costs in Western Australia. That is what needs to happen. Work was done by the Property Council of Australia on the tax components. It found that there is something like 25 per cent tax involved in housing. The government needs to take a serious look at the housing issue in Western Australia. Of course we will support this bill, but my assessment of it is that if a real estate investment trust comes in and builds a 100-unit development and it gets this 50 per cent concession, I think the government will end up getting more tax than from a normal owner-occupier development anyhow because it will end up with the 50 per cent, whereas at the moment it is probably getting less than that. As I said earlier, a lot of individual home owners do not pass the threshold of \$300 000, so they pay nothing. They could own up to five or six units before they kick over that threshold. It is not a very generous move. It is nothing, really. Quite frankly, I will be surprised if, in a year's time, after this bill has passed, we see one development. Maybe I will be wrong. I will be happy to be proved wrong. If the minister has somebody lined up and ready to go when this bill is passed, I will be very pleased, but I cannot see it making a substantive change to the housing crisis.

This is despite the wealth of riches that have poured into this government over the last seven years through the massive increases in revenue—the windfall gains. As I said, I did a calculation comparing the out years with last year's budget. For the five years previously, there was \$43 billion in additional windfall gains to Western Australia, yet we have people sleeping in tents and cars because they cannot get affordable apartments. This is a serious challenge for the government. It is a serious challenge for Minister Carey, despite what he is doing in pulling all those levers. He is running around like the proverbial chook with its head chopped off; he cannot work out where he is going. He is pulling all those levers. I mean, seriously, this is the problem we have in Western Australia. I support the bill, but I will wait with bated breath to see what happens, because I doubt we will see much change going forward.

HON DAN CADDY (North Metropolitan) [2.53 pm]: This is the first time I have risen since the budget was released, so I will start by commending the Treasurer on a fantastic budget today. It is an absolutely outstanding budget for the people of Western Australia.

At the outset of my contribution, I also want to recognise my friend and colleague in the other place Dr Jags Krishnan for his carriage of the Land Tax Assessment Amendment (Build-to-Rent) Bill 2023 as parliamentary secretary. I could be wrong, but I believe that it was the first bill he has seen through as parliamentary secretary, or possibly the second. Well done to him. This bill represents the many things the Cook Labor government is doing in this space, primarily around housing. Earlier this year, many of us spoke on the previous land tax bill—the Land Tax Assessment Amendment (Residential Construction Exemptions) Bill 2023. That was a great example of something that the Cook government is doing to tackle the very real issue of housing in Western Australia. The Land Tax Assessment Amendment (Build-to-Rent) Bill 2023 is another example of that.

Western Australia deserves a government that has a history of doing and the smarts to do what is right for Western Australia, and that is this government. That is in stark contrast to what we see from members opposite, not just in housing but across all policy areas. In fact, one of my colleagues this morning—I cannot remember who it was—pointed to the other side and referred to it as a policy-free zone. That is exactly what it is, especially on housing. We have one of the most innovative housing ministers, so even if the opposition had policies and tried to keep up with him, it would not be able to. That was no more evident in the area of housing than when I read an op-ed by Hon Steve Martin earlier this week. I have a printout of that with me. I will not quote from it, but I will quote some statistics from it. This is very interesting.

Hon Kate Doust interjected.

Hon DAN CADDY: No, I am not going to read it in. The op-ed contains 3 604 characters, 747 words, 26 paragraphs and not one single idea. It has not one idea, not one policy thought and not even a thought bubble—nothing that actually contributes in any meaningful way to solving the housing issue.

There has been a significant emphasis on housing in this chamber this week. We have had motions on housing that have looked at the issues from many different angles. This bill is primarily around housing. I will look towards

housing in a general sense before I speak to the specifics of the bill. I will look at some other avenues that have been discussed in this place this week. I will just pick up on something that Hon Dr Brad Pettitt said when he was talking about housing. I will give Hon Dr Brad Pettitt credit for something—he actually came up with an idea. He spent a lot of time describing the issue. His idea may not be one that the government or I agree with, but he at least put something forward. It is what I would consider to be an extreme proposal. I think the Leader of the House rightly pointed out that he is wont to do that, because as a member of a minor party, he will never have to live by the decisions or policies that he would like to put in place. However, that was certainly better than what we have seen from the opposition—from those who would have us believe they are the alternative government. The op-ed was a fantastic opportunity for Hon Steve Martin to put forward the opposition's policy agenda, but there was not a single idea in it. Hon Dr Brad Pettitt talked about one of the government's other initiatives in housing—that is, to bring short-stay rentals onto the long-term rental market. I will quickly address the one idea that he came up with, because it is from a Victorian government policy. That policy was implemented this year, so there is absolutely no data to say that it works. There is no data to say that it does not work, either.

There is another housing issue that I want to raise. This government and Minister John Carey, who is an outstanding minister, have put housing and homelessness policies front and centre of everything they do. Hon Dr Brad Pettitt compared Western Australia with Tasmania at one point and said that the Tasmanian government had spent more on housing.

Hon Steve Martin: I think that might have been me, actually.

Hon DAN CADDY: Hon Steve Martin did that later, but Hon Dr Brad Pettitt brought it up as well. Hon Steve Martin went back some time in history and listed the spends. Hon Dr Brad Pettitt was talking about the last reporting period. From what I can see, Tasmania, in its entire budget, spent \$373 million on housing and homelessness. In the same period, Western Australia spent nearly 50 per cent more than that on housing, and that is without the homelessness component. It is important when inaccurate things are said in this place that we correct the record and we talk about —

Hon Steve Martin: Twice the spend of Tasmania?

Hon DAN CADDY: The honourable member was not listening. That is without the homelessness component. Twice the spend on housing, without the homelessness component, that Tasmania included in its budget. It is still significant and still needs to be pointed out that when something is said in this place and is not true, we need to point out —

Hon Steve Martin interjected.

Hon DAN CADDY: Does the member know how far I have to go to find a housing policy from his side? I have to go back to before the last election. The member might be surprised to know this, but it was not one of his; it is one from the Nationals WA. It has Hon Mia Davies' face on the bottom of it. That is how far I had to go back. I had to go back to a National Party policy to find a policy on housing that was put at the last election. It was a \$100 million plan with a five-point plan, but at least it had a plan. That may well be the reason it is now the opposition and the Liberal Party is not, because it came to the election with policies. It was not much of a policy at all, but at least it had it and it had a plan. Although it was not much, it came from Hon Mia Davies. I notice that Hon Mia Davies, who I have often referred to the National Party's most valuable player, hung up her boots very early on in this season and she is now in the departure lounge. Only last month this chamber saw Hon Martin Aldridge stand up and say that he, too, was not going to recontest the next election. Unfortunately for the Nationals WA, that is the brains trust of the National Party walking out the door. Its MVP and its potential future captain have now vacated the playing arena.

Hon Steve Martin: I know it is late on a Thursday, but can you talk to the land tax assessment bill at any stage?

Hon DAN CADDY: Yes, 100 per cent. I recognise that, but as I said, it is a bill that is primarily around housing and affordable housing.

Hon Donna Faragher: It's an opportunity to filibuster because you have no other legislation, that's why.

Hon DAN CADDY: Hon Donna Faragher, our collective favourite member of the opposition; it is a very good opportunity to speak on all the things —

Hon Donna Faragher: Because you have got nothing else to do!

Hon DAN CADDY: I still have some time. I still have a good half an hour, member.

I will speak specifically to the bill and will address some of the things Hon Neil Thomson said, because he talked about the Property Council of Australia and I will address its report. I have a fantastic report here from the Property Council of Australia authored by Emily Young, one of the outstanding minds in property in this state. Housing is a multifaceted issue. Anyone who listened to the Leader of the House earlier today and yesterday would recognise this. She listed very briefly some of the fantastic things that we are doing in housing, alongside this bill that we are debating today. It is about rentals; it is about housing stock. It is about opening up the state for future

development. It is about adaptive planning regulations. It is about making infill development more attractive and more doable. To that end, I will go through only three or four of the things that we are doing and return to the core of this bill.

This bill at its essence is about housing. Just last month, there was a major funding boost to unlock regional development-ready land. This is something that the Minister for Housing has been on for a long time—credit to him. The Cook government is now delivering in regional Western Australia almost \$35 million in new investment to supply more shovel-ready land for housing in the Kimberley, Karratha and the goldfields. This is a significant boost for regional land development at almost \$35 million. Along with this land tax bill, this will go toward increasing housing supply as well. As I said, it includes land for Kalgoorlie, Karratha and Broome. It includes money to improve necessary infrastructure around some of these areas. An example of that would be the extension of Tanami Drive, which is a critical connection in Broome, as Hon Neil Thomson would tell us. This road extension will provide important access to around 500 future residential housing lots. Another great initiative from this government and from this minister was what is being called the granny flat exemptions. I mentioned planning reform. My good friend the minister John Carey has been a giant in the area of planning reform, as was his predecessor. One such reform is just this: relaxed amendments to the residential design codes aimed at boosting housing supply by removing minimum lot size requirements for ancillary dwellings. This is a big step forward in boosting housing supply as well. Currently, as a result of those changes, R-code compliant granny flats on residential lots of any size in Western Australia do not require planning approval, allowing home owners to simply seek a building permit. They will no longer be required to be compatible with the design of the existing dwelling, which, especially in some of the older suburbs, held some of that back. Minimum lot size requirements have been removed as well, and ancillary dwellings, or as they are affectionately called in the media, granny flats, are not required to have parking bays except for some densities or locations where a car is more likely to be needed. This, just like the build-to-rent bill, is another reform that is designed to improve and increase the supply of housing. This planning reform is nation leading in the way it cuts red tape. These new exemptions will lead to housing diversity, more choice and more supply in areas in Western Australia.

There is the new incentive scheme for property owners to fill empty homes. This is on top of the successful scheme in the Leader of the House's space, when it comes to short-term rentals coming back on the long-term rental market. This is another fantastic initiative that was announced just this week on properties that have been vacant for at least six months. If I remember correctly, it will only apply to properties that are tenanted for 12 months, with a few little caveats in there. This also goes toward helping the long-term rental market. It is on the back of the government's short-term rental accommodation incentives as well.

A major investment as well, just announced last month, is for housing stock to support those most in need, because this is also critically important. This is at the other end of the housing spectrum with an additional \$843 million, which was included in the budget. On top of this is an additional \$90 million for homelessness support services. This is a funding boost that will bring this government's total new investment in housing and homelessness measures since 2021–22 to \$33.2 billion. That is a figure that I would be very happy for Hon Steve Martin to compare with Tasmania any day of the week. I would suggest that it is more than Tasmania has probably put in for using it as a comparator in the last 10 years.

Getting to the core of the bill, and build to rent, what have we done? We have introduced a 50 per cent land tax concession for build-to-rent projects. Any build-to-rent project will provide a stable supply of private rentals. It does not just provide that supply because of the nature of what it is, it decreases volatility in the private rental market. This is the result of the planning reforms we have introduced. We are also introducing a density bonus for developers that introduce a minimum of five per cent social or affordable housing into their developments. We continue to deliver a range of important tax reforms and incentives, which will provide a boost to housing and land supply, while continuing to work with industry to cut red tape. As members can see from the commitments in this budget, we are doing it very quickly in the government sector, compared with what the private sector is doing with build-to-rent.

I will talk briefly about Smith Street as an example. The state government is delivering social housing outcomes in partnership with the community housing sector. The Smith Street build-to-rent project is an area pilot project that will transform a former public housing site in Highgate—one talked about quite a lot in this chamber and the other place—into a contemporary build-to-rent development with ongoing tenancy and property management. As part of the Western Australian government's housing and diversity pipeline, the project will contribute to the growth of social and affordable housing, offering long-term rental tenure. It really is a project focused on housing affordability. It will introduce Western Australia to a successful model of delivering high quality and purpose-built housing, offering long-term tenure and affordability. The project is currently in the negotiation stage, but I look forward to this project getting off the ground. I think it will absolutely be a game changer in this space and show people what can be done at a government level.

In my travels, build-to-rent is not well understood, despite the fact that it has been done successfully—albeit somewhat differently in continental Europe—in the United Kingdom and the United States for some time. There is an incredible build-to-rent development in my region in the North Metropolitan Region that is already functioning

and doing well. It is called The Elements. It is a sustainable, 100 per cent rental apartment community basically purpose-built for renters. The building design features one, two and three-bedroom apartments, and there are different floor plans amongst that. Just as exciting is a development in the same area, not far away, by Celsius Property Group. I was recently talking to Richard Pappas from Celsius about this. Richard and his company have a well-deserved reputation for building extremely well finished and well appointed apartments. They are indeed highly sought after addresses in Perth. I am sure, with his two new projects side by side, one of which is build-to-rent, this will be no exception.

Members in this place would be aware of DevelopmentWA's award-winning Montario Quarter. We know that many rightsizers—a term I have only come across recently—are desperate to move out of the no longer fit-for-purpose family home while staying in their local community. Celsius' build-to-rent development there is set to provide a significant number of premium build-to-rent dwellings on this site. Montario Quarter provides a perfect location, especially for people who may be at a point in time in which they move out of the family home when their kids have gone. It is a near-city location connected to public transport, not far from a medical precinct and large employment hubs, amongst other things. I think lot 36 is the build-to-rent component of this outstanding development. It comprises 226 apartments, with a choice of studio, and one, two and three-bedroom apartments to be offered exclusively to tenants with long-term rental tenure. It is a unique community experience with significant amenity never seen before in a build-to-rent offering in Perth—from what I have been told. As I said just a couple of minutes ago, Celsius Property Group certainly has a reputation for high-specification and high-amenity developments. To have a company like Celsius choose to go down this build-to-rent path is incredibly encouraging.

The Land Tax Assessment Amendment (Build-to-Rent) Bill 2023 seeks to amend the Land Tax Assessment Act 2002 through the introduction of this 50 per cent land tax concession for land use and build-to-rent development. I said not long ago that I think build-to-rent is not largely understood, but large-scale build-to-rent developments are a relatively new form of urban housing in Western Australia, and are proven in the US, and certainly in Europe. I know in continental Europe it is a slightly different style. When I have been fortunate to live in Europe, buildings of this nature are often owned by local governments or, indeed, by trade unions. They own the entire building. There may be a building of 300 apartments with a build-to-rent function and it works extremely well. Despite my experience living there and sort of knowing what build-to-rent was, the first time I really saw a detailed presentation on it was in 2017. It was using examples of what was occurring in the US and the UK. It was a new concept to me at the time—not actually new as I have described, but my understanding of it was new. My understanding had been influenced by what I observed in Europe. This really took my understanding of how it worked to a new level, in which these buildings actually provide not just more accommodation, but stable, long-term accommodation for people in the rental market, and also cuts down market volatility.

Our present housing crisis absolutely requires an all-hands-on-deck approach. I spoke to Richard Pappas from Celsius Property Group and he said it needs an approach in which industry works collaboratively with all levels of government, and he thinks this is the only way we increase supply right across the housing continuum.

Hon Neil Thomson briefly mentioned the Property Council of Australia. I had the very great fortune to meet with the interim executive director of the Property Council, Emily Young. I have a report here in my hand authored by her titled *Prosperity through property: A roadmap to unleashing Western Australia's potential*. It is an outstanding report and I will quote from it in a minute. Emily has impressed me, as I think she has many people. I will quote comments attributed to Emily, which sum up the message that she has been putting forward for some time to members of the government and the opposition, and people she has met with. In a media statement, she outlined —

Workforce capacity is crucial in Western Australia's ability to build the homes needed to house every Western Australian.

The state faces a significant uphill battle in building the workforce needed to substantially boost WA's housing stocks.

WA forward work schedule is exceeding its historical average, at the same time the national forward work expectation is declining against the historical average. Tempering economic growth expectations across east coast markets could offer a silver lining in the state's ability to attract interstate workers.

I will pause there because it relates a little to what we were talking about briefly this morning or yesterday—that is, the absolute importance of bringing skilled workers into Western Australia and the important role that a skilled workforce will play in the future of housing in Western Australia. The media release continues —

“Now is the time for the state government to double down on promoting WA, and incentivising businesses to look nationally to grow our workforce.

“Workers should be confident that there'll be a strong and steady pipeline of jobs in WA's property industry for the foreseeable future.

I will pause to point out that the history of this government when it comes to building jobs in this state is unsurpassed. I believe the latest figure is that about 300 000 jobs have been created in this state since the Labor government, under Premiers McGowan and Cook, came to power.

It continues —

“With a robust building and construction sector, we can build the homes needed to sustain WA growth over the long term.”

That is exactly where our government is going. Emily is an absolute powerhouse in the property sector and without doubt the greatest asset the Property Council of Australia has here in Western Australia, and the Cook government understands the challenges she outlines in the media release. We have a plan to attract and train the workers who are needed in this industry. This is a critical component. It may well have been the Leader of the House who spoke about this because she is extremely knowledgeable in the area of training and education. During the Barnett years, we saw a change in the fees people were charged to undertake TAFE courses. Now that we have reduced the cost of courses, a lot of which have zero fees, it has allowed people to get into trades et cetera. We also saw the deregulation—that might not be the right term—of the building market. Historically, as was certainly the case when I built my first house some 30 years ago, people had a contract with a builder and the builder had all the trades under their umbrella. It was in their interests to keep training people. There was this constant flowthrough of apprentices and people learning the tools of the trade. That very much changed prior to this government coming in. It all became about subcontractors to subcontractors and there was very little interest or the financial possibility of training all these people. Part of the problem we see now, when we do not have the tradespeople we need—the brickies, chippies and electricians—is because of the changes to the business model.

I return to the report. Emily is the author of the report. I do not have time to go through it. As I said, we are lucky to have people like her, with all her experience in property—she has one of the sharpest minds of anyone in property I have met—putting their brainpower towards this issue, genuinely interacting with the state and the government and putting ideas forward that are not totally out there. They are feasible ideas that can work and really help. Although the property council welcomes the build-to-rent bill, I am well aware that it would like to see us go to 100 per cent. That is the message it has been putting out there.

I wanted to go through a lot of things in this report but I will not. I turn to page 13 and the recommendation “Lead Australia in build-to-rent investment attraction”. It states —

Build-to-rent, a professionally managed rental product often backed by institutional capital, offers a solution to WA’s rental availability shortfall.

Beyond its capability to bring significant quantities of long-term rental stock to market, build-to-rent offers economic and social benefits, including housing stability, enhanced community connectivity and flexible, amenity-rich living spaces which are typically pet friendly.

It goes on to outline what different states are doing, where they fall with respect to eligibility for these programs and the thresholds. It is a comprehensive report. I recommend it to anyone who wants to better understand not only build to rent, because that is only a very small component of this report, but also ideas on how the property market can certainly be used to unleash the potential of Western Australia and get us to where we need to be.

As I said, I picked up that report. I could have picked up many other reports on the sector but that is the one I landed on to talk about. There are some brilliant people in this state, both inside and outside government, who are setting their minds to this issue and coming up with policy ideas on a broad range of fronts. Like Emily and others, this government recognises that we need, as I said at the start, a broad range of approaches to solve the current housing issues. These issues are not unique to Western Australia or Australia; they are being experienced right around the world. Because of that, we need to come up with different solutions. We need to find multiple methods of tackling these issues and take a multifaceted approach, hence the reason I went through three, four or possibly five of the initiatives that the housing minister has put in place.

We are very fortunate to have such an outstanding housing minister. He is a minister with vision and energy and who understands that there are so many ways that we can approach this issue and so many things we can do to make a difference. If we tackle this on multiple fronts, we will absolutely have a far more successful run when attempting to alleviate the housing crisis in this state.

One of these initiatives forms the basis of this bill—that is, an incentive to build more build-to-rent developments. That is essentially what this bill is about. It seeks to incentivise this option through the provision of a 50 per cent land tax concession for up to 20 years. That is in stark contrast to the policies of the previous government. I know that members opposite will be disappointed if I manage to get through a whole contribution without pointing out something that happened under the previous government. Members should be disappointed no longer; I have arrived at that.

Hon Kate Doust: You’ve already done it.

Hon DAN CADDY: But there is so much, Hon Kate Doust, that I forget.

Hon Kate Doust: You could have made the point that they hadn’t ever had any policies on this.

Hon DAN CADDY: That is certainly a point well made and a point that cannot be argued.

My good friend the member for Mount Lawley, Simon Millman, MLA, who has also decided not to contest the next election and will be sorely missed, reminded me just the other day that his predecessor as the member for Mount Lawley, Hon Michael Sutherland, and former Speaker —

Hon Kate Doust: He wasn't honourable.

Hon DAN CADDY: He may not have been local but he was the member for Mount Lawley; that is indisputable. He was the member who was replaced by Simon Millman. Michael Sutherland laid some of the blame for the loss of his seat, for no longer being the member for Mount Lawley and indeed for the election loss—it was more of a personal thing for him—on the Barnett government's policies on land tax that saw it increase three times in a row. He did have policies once, member. What a contrast! This goes a little bit to what Hon Dr Brad Pettitt was saying earlier this week when he said that the best way to do that is to tax people—to increase taxes. This is the contrast, and it is a clear contrast. It is there because of the sound economic management of this government and cabinet, across both the McGowan and Cook governments. We are in a position to be able to use these incentives. As a government, we choose to use the carrot rather than the stick being advocated by others. The previous government's policy to increase taxes three times may have been a train wreck, but it was at least a policy, as opposed to the policy-free zone we now see opposite.

I have been through most of what I wanted to say. This bill before the house is outstanding. It is one of many, many times we are using to address this problem. It is just another example of how this government, this cabinet and, I must say, this outstanding Minister for Housing have looked at the issue and asked what they can do and how they can do it. The government has consulted. We have talked to industry and we have listened to industry. We have consulted widely. This is one policy in the suite of policies that we have put together to tackle housing issues. I am fairly confident that as soon as I resume my seat, we will hear from the shadow Minister for Housing, Hon Steve Martin, and I look forward to him giving a speech outlining what the Liberal Party would do differently. I look forward to a policy idea. I look to hearing something that he thinks can take this state forward. I really look forward to a contribution to this debate that adds something positive. At the moment, as it stands, we have not seen a single policy idea from the opposition side in this debate. This is a fantastic bill and I commend it to the house.

HON STEVE MARTIN (Agricultural) [3.31 pm]: We had nearly 45 minutes from Hon Dan Caddy. At some stage, he spent, I guess, five or six minutes talking about the Land Tax Assessment Amendment (Build-to-Rent) Bill 2023, and that was interesting. I think it sums up what this bill will do. It is a good bill and we support it, but Hon Dan Caddy, the Minister for Housing and I know that its actual impact on housing in Western Australia will be very, very limited. That will be the outcome of what this bill will deliver. So Hon Dan Caddy was forced to pad and talk about everything else. Will we get another point of order from that side of the house about relevance ever again in this place after that? I am tempted to talk about South Fremantle football teams in the 1990s and all sorts of other lovely topics that have very little to do with the Land Tax Assessment Amendment (Build-to-Rent) Bill 2023, but I will confine my remarks to the bill. I know that is an unusual tactic this afternoon. I am surprised that the German shepherds did not get another mention by Hon Dan Caddy given the breadth of his discussion about this bill.

Hon Dan Caddy: I did mention pets though, you'd have noticed.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: Hon Dan Caddy certainly did.

Before I get to the bill, I cannot help myself saying something about Tasmania. Honestly, if Hon Dan Caddy thinks —

Hon Dan Caddy: You guys brought it up.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: I am happy to do it again because Hon Dan Caddy thought that WA doubling the spend of Tasmania over the last eight years was a good thing. I just remind members that the population of Tasmania is 585 000 people; of course, the population of Western Australia is nudging 2.9 million people. But Hon Dan Caddy said, "Well done, we've spent twice what Tasmania has spent—outstanding work." There is not much iron ore in Tasmania, by the way, and not much gas, but anyway the WA government spent twice as much. I thought that was great. I am sure the people of Tasmania are covering after that tongue lashing from Hon Dan Caddy about their deplorable effort of only matching 50 per cent of the spend of the wealthiest state in this country's history. I was also accused of going back into history to discuss things like Tasmania. Of course, Hon Dan Caddy repeatedly went back a few years further and talked about the record of the Barnett government.

I think there was mention of a policy-free zone. I have a fair idea that not only was there a policy-free zone for the first four or five years of the McGowan government, there was an action-free zone. Over and again in this place I have told members about the record in the first four years of this government. Was the housing minister of the time even turning up to cabinet? If they were, they were completely ineffectual. This housing minister we have now is still scrambling to get ahead of those wasted years. By the government's figures, 114 homes have been added to the social housing stock in this state as of the end of March, of those, not quite half were spot purchased, so the government has not added any homes at all. Spot purchasing houses takes them out of the private market and puts them in the social market.

I turn to the Land Tax Assessment Amendment (Build-to-Rent) Bill 2023. As I said, the opposition supports this piece of legislation and what it will do. As we heard from Hon Dan Caddy, it talks about a reduction in land tax

for a build-to-rent development, which must meet some of the following requirements. It must be owned by the same owner or group of owners and managed by one management entity. Leader of the House, I assume we will go to Committee of the Whole House, but I am not certain. I will ask a few questions along the way, so the Leader of the House can have a chance to answer them in reply if we do not get to committee. The development must have been constructed substantially for the purpose of providing these 40 self-contained dwellings for lease under a residential tenancy agreement. I note that 40 is an arbitrary number, but it is different from other jurisdictions, so I would be keen to hear why that is and why the government settled on 40. The second reading speech, or certainly the detail of the bill, talks about the fact that the percentage of land in a development that is used for build to rent will be the bit that the land tax assessment is made on. Excuse my ignorance, is that the square metres of the apartments? I would like a little bit more detail on that, please. The exemption applies for 20 consecutive assessment years from the first year the development meets the requirements. The exemption will cease to apply if the land no longer meets the criteria. The explanatory memorandum talks about a different period of time for the retrospective removal of the exemption. It states —

If a build-to-rent development ceases to qualify for the exemption within the first 15 years, the owner is required to pay the land tax that was not assessed for the years the exemption applied.

I am keen to know why there is a difference between the 15 years and the 20 years. That might be easily explained.

It is a good scheme. I am all for less tax in all sorts of areas, and this is actually one of them. Unfortunately, in the housing and construction market in Western Australia at the moment, first of all, there is almost no capacity left in the apartment sector. I think we have one tier 1 building company. We still have Metronet rolling out, we still have hospitals to be built and, I assume, we still have Common Ground to be built at some stage, so there is a lot of pressure from the state in that large-scale building development space. We have seen what has happened with construction price rises over the last four or five years. They have gone up steadily. That is having a longer term impact on the construction sector, and builders are nervous. They have been burnt in all sectors, but particularly in the residential sector. Those who signed fixed-price contracts, if they were unlucky, as COVID hit and the stimulus arrived are still trying to get out of that mess three or four years later, and prices have risen 35 to 40 per cent, so the building sector has become more cautious to weather this storm. If we listen to the building sector, apartments do not stack up anywhere at the moment apart from probably the western suburbs. If they go to 10 storeys, let alone 15 storeys, it just gets worse.

Is there a sort of building that this legislation will apply to? Could there be 40 separate units in an estate? I assume there is one title for this sort of development as well. Is there a restriction on whether the building is medium rise, high rise et cetera? I would be keen to hear.

As we have heard, feasibility studies are being done on six to seven build-to-rent projects in Perth. There is at least one, and possibly two, on the ground, and a couple that are looking closely at the prospect. As Hon Neil Thomson said, I am not sure this will be a massive calculation in the sums to determine whether it is a goer. I think it is probably more about whether it can be built in time, and it will be about the yields. These are large investing organisations that will be interested in the return. It would not be a surprise that they are looking at Western Australia now because we have seen what has happened with rent prices. Our rents are going up faster than anywhere else in the country and that would have attracted investors' attention. It has certainly attracted private investors from the east who are buying house and land packages. Some developments are being purchased north of 50 per cent by keen investors from the east—usually one house and land package at a time—because the yields work at the moment. House and land packages have gone up, but our yields have gone up faster.

Hon Wilson Tucker is away from the chamber on urgent parliamentary business, but he is in the rental market. He will tell members what rents have done. If he had been in the rental market in Western Australia a little longer, going back nearly a decade, he would know that rents in Western Australia go up and down. In 2013, I rented a property for my son just after he left school and rents were very high in comparative terms. If we had rented that property 12 months later, it would have been 25 per cent less. The point I am making is that rental yields will go up and down. I would be interested to know what the build-to-rent sector thinks about this sort of investment as Western Australian yields drop back below Sydney and Melbourne. I am a loyal and passionate Western Australian and I know that we get a little carried away about the fact that we are the centre of the world. We know we are—the VFL does not! However, capital flows into Australia; it looks at Sydney first and might have a glance at Melbourne, and everything else is really hard work. It is hard work getting capital out of that east coast strip, and the build-to-rent sector will be no different. They will come if it stacks up. It will have to stack up even more than it does in Sydney. If it is the same price as Sydney or Melbourne, they will go there. Perth will have to be better to get any money and it will have to stay better for some time. It will be interesting to see what happens when those yields go back and drop below Sydney. I assume that these projects might hit the market after the 15-year exemption. I ask the minister whether they can be strata titled after that event. Again, that is something I do not know.

Hon Kate Doust: It's in the speech.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: Yes. It is not a bad thing if it is taken from the rental market. Fifteen years is a good term. If we go from that to private ownership in some form, that would be a good thing.

I wish the government well to ease this housing crisis—I honestly do. I think we will see a small moving of the dial from this policy, given the constraints in all sorts of areas in the state. As I said, the opposition supports the bill; I am all for less tax.

HON KATE DOUST (South Metropolitan) [3.43 pm]: I am pleased to have this opportunity to comment on the Land Tax Assessment Amendment (Build-to-Rent) Bill 2023. Like my colleague Hon Dan Caddy said, it fits in with the theme of the week that we have been dealing with around issues of housing and what the government has sought to do. Although this bill has been on the notice paper for a little while, it is a significant change and one that will be welcomed in the community, particularly as it is focused solely on trying to create opportunities in the social housing sector for properties to be built purely for the purpose of rent, not sale, and might open up the door to a number of people who cannot buy but who might be provided with some affordable housing. I note that this has been reasonably successful in the eastern states, partly because rents are so much higher for people who need to live in Sydney or Melbourne. I picked up an article from Mirvac about a number of very successful projects it has running in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, and they are not just a block of apartments or units, but build upon community with shared facilities and access to other services nearby so that people do not live in isolation. I find that quite attractive. It is a little like how we tried to revamp Brownlie Towers in the early 2000s, by building community with services and facilities so that people did not have to travel too far. Part of that holds appeal to me.

We talked briefly about this bill yesterday, but did not get to spend a lot of time on build-to-rent. This is just one of the many options this government is trying to put in place to remedy the housing situation to enable people to access housing that works for them. This is a carrot, if you like, and an opportunity to encourage and incentivise developers to look at this as an option, as something different, and particularly to focus on social housing. I know there is an appetite for this because I have been involved in a couple of projects and, if I recall rightly, this is an issue Hon Donna Faragher and I talked about at a function at the Karrakatta Club 18 months to two years ago. I am not sure whether it was the honourable member or Hon Mia Davies, or both.

Hon Donna Faragher: I think it was Hon Mia Davies.

Hon KATE DOUST: Yes; you are both good people, so I just got confused.

I think Hon Donna Faragher was with me at another function.

Hon Donna Faragher: We discussed it.

Hon KATE DOUST: That is right. The focus of that panel discussion was how women over 55 years old are finding themselves homeless in growing numbers or finding it difficult to access a home, for a variety of reasons, be it loss of job or redundancy, a breakdown in family arrangements, divorce, income issues, lack of access to purchase or not having a deposit. The idea of having something like this is good. One of the projects I have been working on through the advocacy group of Soroptimist International of Western Australia, particularly through the South Perth branch of which I am a member—a very good group of women, I must say, who are very active in this space—is an engagement with property developers who are keen to do good work in the social housing space. They see the opportunities and they want to do something particularly for that cohort of women trying to find space. It has taken a while because it is complicated to get these things up and going. I imagine that these types of changes would hold great appeal to a group like that and might speed along the process, given where there is land and trying to find the right mechanism—I hate to use the phrase “levers to pull”—to get the project up and going. That type of project would be a mixed project. It was planned for not just women, but for people with disabilities and families on low incomes. It would be a combined social housing effort. This legislation will put in place a threshold of 40 units on one development, which is potentially an attractive model for developers who choose to go down this pathway.

I listened to Hon Steve Martin and although he did not use the words, I think he was referring to returns and profit. Although the people we have been dealing with know that there will be money coming back in, it is not necessarily about making the huge bucks, but about delivering a good outcome for people in the community. We are enthusiastic about working with those people. These are people who have built substantial apartment blocks, other housing projects and industrial projects for their whole working arrangements and have now decided that social housing is an interesting and good way to put back into community. I hope the passage of this bill will further encourage them to go down this pathway. I am involved with another social housing project on a parcel of land, and hopefully this type of change will assist with that.

The bill in front of us seeks to do a couple of things. It fits in very nicely with some of the announcements that have been made in the budget today that reinforce the purpose and intent behind this type of change. This bill will provide tax relief to encourage the development of rental properties in WA and is a step forward to addressing the issue of housing affordability and availability. The bill aims to bolster the supply of rental properties by providing incentives for build-to-rent developments. I have already talked about two examples that I am quite hopeful about. I listened to my colleague talk about the projects in Highgate and in the northern suburbs, which are exciting. Some of the construction companies that were referenced are quite active in this space and are providing well-constructed and long-term social housing projects that people would like to live in and enjoy a good life in.

These types of housing developments are constructed specifically for the purpose of providing multiple residential dwellings for lease under residential tenancy agreements. The land tax exemption will introduce a 50 per cent land tax exemption for eligible build-to-rent developments. The bill provides a raft of detail about the nature of the different exemptions that will apply in this arena. I think Hon Steve Martin asked how long it would be in place for. The bill refers to the first 15 years. If the development is sold after 15 years, the exemption will not continue. However, if the arrangements are not changed, the exemption will last for 20 years. That is a very solid time for people to be in one place.

The beauty of these types of build-to-rent developments, as I understand—the minister can correct me in due course, and I am sure she will—is that the lease arrangements can be anything from a couple of months to three years or beyond. That gives people a sense of stability and security. We heard enough this week about people being forced out of short-term rental properties without proper reason. When I was younger, I had to move four times in six weeks when I was living in rental properties. It is destabilising to have to work out where to find a roof over your head. The idea is that this arrangement will provide some certainty for people. Again, I come back to women in the circumstances I am focused on, which is women over 55 years old who do not want to have to move from place to place. They want their own place to live in. They want to live in and build a sense of community and build relationships and have access to services, shops, hairdressers, the library and nearby offices, if possible. I think that is really attractive for them. The minister can again correct me, but I imagine that if they had a three-year lease, there would be an option to extend that arrangement because of the nature of this type of social housing.

Another thing this bill will do is that once a few projects get off the ground, it might encourage others to participate. Hon Steve Martin reflected upon what Hon Neil Thomson said when he Pooh-Bahed the idea and said this would not get off the ground and not many people would engage in this type of development. I think he is wrong. I think that the incentive through this amendment bill will inspire some developers and property owners to rethink what they do with their properties and think about the opportunities of providing for people in need who are looking for housing. I think back to Brownlie Towers because it is a good example. People had lived in Brownlie Towers for 15 or 20 years. That was their home and their community. If people can find a safe and stable place to live, they put down roots and stay. They rebuild their lives and re-engage. I think this is a really important change. This is probably a new thing to happen here, although it has been said that these types of build-to-rent opportunities have existed for a long time in the United Kingdom and the United States. I remember reading a fantastic article many years ago about a property in San Francisco, which is essentially this type of model, that was predominantly tenanted by women. They may have all been women who had moved into the units, hence my attraction to the article. They had common areas where they could come together and build a sense of community. I always found that attractive. I hope that when the developer, the builder, the owner and the management are all the same person, that will make life easier for the tenants because they will deal with only one person and not a number of constantly changing real estate agents who manage the property. That will provide some stability and certainty about the ongoing maintenance of the property as well. I think that will be a positive thing. This is not just about property developers; it will enable superannuation funds to look at investing in these arrangements. I have read articles about that happening in other countries where it has been an attractive proposition for super funds to put their members' money into these types of developments.

Build-to-rent schemes can offer women the benefit of providing affordability and flexibility because they provide a more affordable rental option than traditional housing. Coupled with that, we have in place under this government the rent relief program that provides financial assistance to those in need. We have amended the tenancy laws to prevent rent bidding, reduce the frequency of rent increases and allow tenants to make minor changes. I think that is really attractive. Again, I come back to Brownlie Towers. When the \$20-odd million renovation of Brownlie Towers occurred in the early 2000s, the government gave people the opportunity to choose the paint colour for their own home and the tiles and the laminate so that it became their home. I am not saying that every tenant in a build-to-rent development would have all those opportunities, but they might be able to put a picture on the wall, which cannot necessarily be done in a standard rental property. They might also be able to have a pet and do a range of things that they cannot under the current arrangements. Women, especially those facing financial constraints, could find housing that fits their budget without the burden of having to pay a mortgage or deal with property maintenance. Let us face it, for women who have been made redundant, lost out financially because of a marital breakdown and separation from the family, or who have experienced a financial bust, finding the money for a home deposit is, sadly, a pipedream in some cases and is just not obtainable. That is especially the case if they have come to the end of their working life and do not have enough superannuation to carry them through. The measures in this bill will provide another option for them to have some permanency and stability in their abode.

The second point that I have touched on is the security and safety aspect. For women—particularly of our age, Leader of the House—that becomes more and more important. Women want to know that they will be safe in their own home. We are seen stories recently about a number of women who have been unexpectedly and, in some cases, tragically, assaulted in their home. Women want to know that the building they live in has secure stairwells, lifts and entry points for each apartment or unit. They are the things that developers would incorporate in a modern build-to-rent development because that it is an attractor to a particular type of tenant.

Another point about the attractiveness of building to rent is that it emphasises community living. I have already talked about a couple of examples of people coming together and getting to know each other. I know that there are other projects, such as Common Ground and the Michelle Blakeley project, which involves a cluster of tiny homes. All those things are about not only providing security, but also ensuring community. Community is very important for all of us. There might be access in these arrangements to gardens or other things that encourage engagement and a sense of community.

Another issue is maintenance and repair. It is not always easy for someone in a private rental to get the landlord to fix things, or they might have to do it or pay for it themselves. In the build-to-rent space, the landlord or the owner of the property would be expected to take carriage of and resolve those situations. There is also the issue of location and accessibility. It would be anticipated that most of these places would be around public transport access points such as train and bus stations. I look with enthusiasm at the opening of the corridor from Victoria Park to Cannington, where government land has now been freed up alongside the train line. I am not sure whether there was an announcement earlier this week about opportunities to build on some of that land, but I certainly know that some of the developers that were going to build apartments elsewhere are now looking to build developments and social housing near the train stations in the Welshpool area. Again, it is an attractor. It makes life easier. In the case that I am talking about, it would support the women who live in developments close to public transport to access work, training, study, medical services, family and other any social activity, and they would not have to rely on others to get them to and from places. It is a little like the developments in the eastern states that are clustered around traffic hubs. It is very important. I am sure that Hon Dr Brad Pettitt would agree with me on that point, but not much else.

Hon Dr Brad Pettitt: On more than you think.

Hon KATE DOUST: On more than I think; okay.

The final point on women in particular is about having flexible arrangements in the build-to-rent space. There can be a short period; I understand that it can be from just three months through to three years or longer. Everyone has different circumstances and needs. In the private housing sector, quite often the initial lease is much longer and the tenant is constrained if they leave because they can get caught by penalties and everything else. For most women, the flexibility would fit in with their family life, their career, their educational pursuits or their travel or with their transition to a different type of housing, depending on their point in life. It will also mean that the developer can incorporate a range of other facilities in these developments, such as gyms, community centres and meeting rooms. The development in Victoria Park certainly has community rooms and barbecues so that people can share the facilities and come together and see their family and have friends over. These are common things that are seen in significant properties around the city, but the idea that these types of arrangements can be incorporated into social housing has so many positive benefits and outcomes for the health and wellbeing of the tenant. It will be interesting to see the nature and design of the facilities that are incorporated into these developments. I think the proposal that the government has put forward in this legislation is quite exciting. As I said, it is just another option it has to try to address the issues.

A fantastic budget has just been put forward. I will quote a few things from the Treasurer's speech that will back up this legislation and make it more attractive for developers to step up and engage in the build-to-rent space. The budget speech refers to a massive \$1.1 billion for housing and homelessness-related initiatives. Another \$400 million will be invested in the expanded social and affordable housing investment fund, taking the total investment in the fund to \$1.6 billion. Hopefully, part of that investment will pick up on these issues. In addition, there will be an extra \$144 million for new social and affordable residential apartments across WA, and reference is made to the Pier Street project. Grants totalling \$60 million will be delivered to regional community housing providers for new and refurbished housing, and there is a \$25 million provision to improve the energy performance of housing in Indigenous communities. I know that Hon Dan Caddy talked about a number of projects in regional areas, and I think we referenced some of that yesterday. An additional \$35 million will be provided for development-ready land in Broome, Karratha and Kalgoorlie.

The government will also introduce a new scheme to increase the availability of long-term rentals, and \$5 million has been allocated for grants of \$5 000 for owners of vacant homes who place them on the long-term rental market. I know that that was referenced in an earlier speech and was touched upon yesterday. It is an interesting proposal. That is the government thinking outside the box. It is not just the government. I note that this week, even before the government's announcement, the South Perth council put out feelers to ratepayers in South Perth to see whether they would be interested in renting out any vacant properties they have within the confines of that local government area. Local governments are also acknowledging that business has to be done differently to get people engaged and to try to find interesting solutions to the situation.

Today, the government has reinforced its longstanding commitment to try to address the issue of housing. The challenge comes in a variety of forms, because there is not one simple solution for every individual. People need different types of housing solutions. I think the government has been very mature and has constructed a very good budget and a plan going forward for how to address the issue. It will not necessarily fix it, but I think it will go a long way towards providing remedies.

I am going to back up the words of my colleague about the minister. I said a few things yesterday. I think John Carey is doing an outstanding job, and I am going to say that again. He lives and breathes this stuff. I know that he is open to all sorts of ideas. He does not dismiss anything. He does not say, “No; that’s crazy. Don’t come near me.” He will listen.

Hon Neil Thomson interjected.

Hon KATE DOUST: You, my friend over the way, would have to be one of the most miserable, carping members of this chamber without any plan for the future.

Point of Order

Hon BEN DAWKINS: Hon Kate Doust should be referring to the Acting President, not directly to the member.

Hon Kyle McGinn: Which standing order is that?

Hon BEN DAWKINS: It is in there somewhere. It is not just the vibe; it is in the standing orders somewhere.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Dr Sally Talbot): Members! When a member takes a point of order, it is not an invitation to have a conversation. There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Hon KATE DOUST: Thank you, Acting President. I will make my comments to the chair and I will say that I listened with intent to the comments from Hon Neil Thomson today. He is so depressing to listen to because all he does is criticise. I am yet to hear any ideas from the other side.

Hon Kyle McGinn interjected.

Hon KATE DOUST: Sorry; I do not need any other help either.

I know that Hon Steve Martin said that when we came to government, there was no action or policy. That is just a mischief. Every single piece of legislation that the Labor government has introduced since it won in 2017 was based on policy that it had crafted leading up to the legislation, and every bit of it has been actioned. I do not think there is too much left; I think it has to find new things to do for the next term.

Hon Neil Thomson interjected.

Hon KATE DOUST: Hon Neil Thomson had his opportunity today. I am not going to wait with bated breath for his response to the budget papers next week because I think we are just going to get more of the same.

The opposition does not come up with solutions for the problems or any new ideas. During the term of the previous Liberal–National government, we did not have these sorts of things on the table that provide opportunities to try to create something different, fill the void and find solutions for housing. There was none of that. The only thing I can recall was that government shutting down social housing opportunities by bulldozing through social housing in certain areas because it wanted to flog off the land and put the money back into its coffers. The other side has a massive challenge to come up with a plan and some ideas that are palatable to the community and will give it a leg-up with voters, because I do not see how it will do it. We learnt this from opposition. The Leader of the House, Hon Stephen Dawson, Hon Dr Sally Talbot and I are probably the only people left here from the eight years that we spent in opposition. I must say that we were in here every day. We were on the ball. We spoke on every bill. We had a plan. We developed policy and we articulated it to the community, and we have delivered upon it. This is one of the things that we have delivered upon. As I said, it is not the be-all and end-all; it is just one of the many solutions that I know Minister Carey has been very keen on putting in place to get things moving along.

I think Minister Carey is doing a great job. He is constantly trying to find ways to improve our housing situation. He tries to find alternatives, whether it is through redeveloping or refurbishing properties, working with community groups or developers on building or repurposing properties, or finding land. I have sat down with him in his office and trawled through many photos and parcels of land trying to find options. He is open to change. I think it is very harsh to criticise him for not giving it a go because he is one of the most enthusiastic Ministers for Housing we have ever had. I think he will have overseen some significant change by the end of this term, because he is certainly trying very hard to get change.

I wanted to couch my comments on this bill in terms of how it could benefit women. It could benefit women from a particular group who are being highlighted as in dire and high need of different types of accommodation. If this bill provides an incentive to developers to construct build-to-rent properties, it will fill a gap in the market and enable some of those women to step through the door and have their own home. That will give them security and stability for not only a short period of their lives but also an extended period and give them comfort and a sense of community. This is a positive step. It has been reinforced again today by the announcements in the budget. It is being backed by the changes that have already been made by this government. It is a very solid effort to try to find a significant part of the solution to the housing issues that we have been talking about all week. I commend the government and look forward to the passing of this bill.

HON DR BRAD PETTITT (South Metropolitan) [4.14 pm]: I rise in support of the Land Tax Assessment Amendment (Build-to-Rent) Bill 2023. I say to Hon Kate Doust that we largely agree, because this is an important addition to the housing mix. I had the opportunity to tour what I understand at the time, in June 2023, was the only operating build-to-rent property in Perth—the Sentinel development, the Elements, in Subi Centro in Subiaco.

Hon Dan Caddy: The Sentinel development.

Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT: Yes, the Sentinel development. I think it is called the Elements.

Hon Dan Caddy: Yes.

Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT: Yes, that is right. It is really good, I must say.

Hon Dan Caddy: I spoke about it.

Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT: Hon Dan Caddy spoke about it; sorry, I was on urgent parliamentary business and I missed it. I suspect Hon Dan Caddy would also agree it is quite impressive. The Property Council of Australia kindly assisted with that, along with Luke from OP Properties, and a shout-out to them. We see it and we realise there is a big gap in the market, and it is really important that we get out there and close it. I want to make a shout-out to Keith Lucas from Sentinel Australia, who joined us and showed us around. The fundamental point, and why this is so important, is that the price of housing now means that a whole generation of people will not be buying houses in the way that certainly my generation and the generation before me most commonly did. We are going to see people more commonly rent for life. We debated our residential tenancies laws, which I think are still not satisfactory; they do not give people a sense of a home for life. But this product can.

With build to rent, people can have a sense of permanency and a surety that someone is not going to sell the house or want to move back in or those sorts of things that we get with the more mums-and-dads rental market. Having that ongoing permanency and professional management of rental properties is going to be really important. It is important for WA that we encourage these because build-to-rent properties are almost always products that are apartment-style. We have been struggling to this kind of apartment development in Western Australia. There is a lot of institutional interest in getting on and doing more of these. This could be the next wave of apartments that we get. Frankly, the only apartments we are getting in Western Australia at the moment, largely, at least, are the western suburbs luxury apartments that are very nice and that Blackburne and others are delivering, but we are not getting the medium-rise and medium-pricepoint apartments that have been built commonly. I think he was a big fan of *The Perth Property Show*. There was a discussion about that issue on that show last week in which the only development that was built in this regard was Montreal Commons in Fremantle. Interestingly, again, Luke Parker from OP Properties was involved in delivering that. We have not seen enough of this product. I think there is a really good opportunity with this legislation and some of the financial incentives that are attached to it to get on and deliver more long-term quality rentals.

I am throwing my wholehearted support behind the legislation. The only suggestions that I will make as we go forward with this legislation is to say that there is a danger that build to rent as it is currently delivered, at least in Western Australia, is largely at the upper end of the market. We certainly saw that with Sentinel in Subiaco, which is probably no surprise, but we are going to need to make sure that we get the incentives right so that we have a broad range of build-to-rent properties for all pricepoints in the market. They are often for people who cannot or choose not to buy. We need to make sure that we get a broad range of build-to-rent properties that are affordable and accessible and well located for people who are on average and even minimum salaries. I think that will be a really important addition to this. I think there is a really important role for government to play in how we do that.

One of the questions I asked during the briefings was around whether student accommodation can get this build-to-rent exemption around land tax. Certainly, the explanation I was given is that it can but it cannot be an exclusive student-only development, which I understand, but I think one of the reasons that there may be value in offering a fair bit of flexibility in that regard is that students and others on lower incomes are the ones who are likely to want to rent in a secure longer term situation. If we can offer that, especially close to public transport and the like, it is going to be really, really important. This legislation is a great opportunity to rethink housing and add to the diverse housing mix in WA. As has been said, this is not a silver bullet. We should not pretend that build to rent by itself will solve the housing crisis, because solving the housing crisis will require many different inputs. In the debate on my motion earlier this week, I talked about a range of things that I see as solutions, but this is another one that we can clearly and honestly say will be part of them. Ultimately, it is quite common that people rent for very large portions of their life and do not actually look to buy. We can make sure that we can offer that for people who are coming here to work for extended periods or for people who have made WA their home and do not want to buy a home but still want a sense of community.

My last point is around making sure that as build-to-rent developments roll out in WA, they are high quality, sustainable and incorporate community into the design. The best build-to-rent developments around the world work really well because they have great community spaces, gyms, shared kitchens and outdoor spaces that create local communities. It is a successful product. If we offer a range of affordable and secure rentals and in the process create better and sustainable high-density housing that is well located close to train stations and other forms of transit, it will create good ongoing communities. The legislation before us today is a good first step in realising that, and I am very happy to support it.

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House) [4.21 pm] — in reply: I thank the following members for their contribution to the second reading debate: Hon Neil Thomson, Hon Steve Martin, Hon Dan Caddy, Hon Kate Doust and Hon Dr Brad Pettitt. I thank them for their support of the legislation. I understand that nobody wants to go into committee, so in my response now I will provide answers to some of the questions that were put to me.

Hon Neil Thomson tried to make a point that a 50 per cent reduction in land tax is not particularly generous. I think he failed to understand what will be implemented under the legislation. It will be a 50 per cent reduction in land value, not land tax. Providing a 50 per cent reduction in land value will result in a tax bill reduction that is larger than 50 per cent. For example, providing a 50 per cent value reduction for a \$4 million piece of land will reduce the tax payable by some 72 per cent. It is indeed considerable. For example, land with an unimproved value of \$1 million would be subject to \$74 130 in land tax. If the land were eligible for the build-to-rent exemption, the land tax would be calculated on a land value of \$500 000 and be \$24 630. That is \$49 565 less than would be payable without the exemption. In contrast, a 50 per cent land tax concession would reduce the tax payable by 50 per cent, resulting in land tax of \$36 565. Making the scheme an exemption instead of a concession will provide a benefit of some \$11 935 to the landowner. That is significant.

Hon Neil Thomson mentioned that most apartments would be under the taxable land threshold and would therefore not be liable for land tax. It is expected that most build-to-rent developments will not be strata titled into individual lots. As such, the land value of the whole development will very likely be above the \$300 000 threshold. There was also a question about land tax being a small proportion of the costs. It is important to note that the commonwealth has also announced two tax incentives for build-to-rent developments, and we expect that they will have a significant and cumulative effect on the market.

I wanted to address the issues raised by Hon Steve Martin, who raised about four or five specific questions. In response to query about the minimum number of dwellings required for a development to be eligible for the exemption, the lower requirement of 40, compared with 50 in other states, reflects consultation with industry here that highlighted the smaller market in WA, which may lead to smaller build-to-rent developments. He queried whether the partial exemption will be based on the square metres of each dwelling of a BTR development. The exemption will apply to a development that is only partially used for build-to-rent, provided it contains at least 40 build-to-rent dwellings. Developments may have some floors containing build-to-rent accommodation and some floors with commercial tenancies. If a development is used for build-to-rent accommodation and unrelated purposes, the 50 per cent exemption will be proportionally reduced based on the building's floor area. That is consistent with the general land tax scheme. If areas of build-to-rent developments are used for commercial purposes, they will usually be charged land tax. If these areas received the benefit of build-to-rent exemptions, they would have a commercial advantage, and we do not intend to do that. The calculation will not include any floor area used for car parks, storage areas, stairwells and other building infrastructure.

Hon Steve Martin asked why a retrospective assessment of land tax will be made if the build-to-rent development ceases to qualify for the exemption within 15 years and not 20 years. If a build-to-rent development ceases to qualify for the exemption within the first 15 years, the owner will be required to pay the land tax that was not assessed for the years the exemption applied. This will provide an incentive for developments to provide build-to-rent accommodation for a significant period, providing increased security of tenure for tenants. If a development ceases to qualify for the exemption after the fifteenth year, retrospective land tax will not be charged, because the minimum policy obligations for providing build-to-rent accommodation will have been met. If a developer chooses to stop providing build-to-rent accommodation after the fifteenth year of the exemption, they will no longer receive the exemption, but no additional land tax will be payable. That 15-year clawback period is consistent with other jurisdictions, particularly Victoria and New South Wales.

Hon Steve Martin also queried whether the 40 dwellings must be within one building or may be in more than one building. The build-to-rent development must be on one lot or parcel of land. A build-to-rent development may be made up of multiple buildings, but to receive the exemption, each of the buildings must still be constructed or substantially renovated for the purpose of providing rental accommodation. Together, the buildings have to provide at least 40 dwellings that are available for build-to-rent tenancies.

Hon Kate Doust also raised an issue about three-year leases. The dwellings in a development must be rented or available for a term of at least three years, although residents can choose a shorter lease term. I think Hon Neil Thomson also raised the issue of whether industry was supportive of this. It certainly is and made public comments to that effect at the time the policy was announced.

Again, can I thank members for their support, and 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

Bill read a third time, on motion by **Hon Sue Ellery (Minister for Finance)**, and passed.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**POLICE — FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE****421. Hon PETER COLLIER to the minister representing the Minister for Police:**

I refer the minister to his response to question without notice 833 on Tuesday, 15 August 2023, and question without notice 375 asked on Tuesday, 7 May 2024.

- (1) Will the minister confirm that the number of actual FTE in the family violence division has declined from 87.65 in August 2023 to 12.2 in May 2024?
- (2) If no to (1), what is the reason for the discrepancy between these two responses?
- (3) If yes to (1), why has this decrease occurred?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for some notice of the question. The Western Australia Police Force advise as follows.

- (1) No.
- (2) The question asked in August 2023 refers to family violence response teams and the question asked in May 2024 refers to the family violence division.
- (3) Not applicable.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**422. Hon PETER COLLIER to the minister representing the Minister for Corrective Services:**

- (1) Is there a position of deputy commissioner for young people within the Department of Justice?
- (2) If yes to (1), when was the position created and who has held the role since its establishment?
- (3) If yes to (1), was the position advertised through the required procedures; and, if not, why not?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

Again, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for some notice of the question. The Department of Justice advises as follows.

- (1) Yes.
- (2) The position was effective from 5 March 2024. No-one has held the role as the department is currently going through the recruitment process. During this period, young people have been administered as per the previous organisational structure.
- (3) Yes.

WILD DOG ACTION PLAN**423. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the Minister for Agriculture:**

I refer to the *Western Australian wild dog action plan 2016–2021*.

- (1) What is the status of the plan, and is it currently under review?
- (2) If yes to (1) —
 - (a) is the review complementary to the review of the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007;
 - (b) will the review take into consideration such matters as —
 - (i) land access;
 - (ii) state government agency and native title proscribed body corporate compliance with the BAM act;
 - (iii) the ongoing use of 1080 poison for baiting purposes; and
 - (iv) the future role of recognised biosecurity groups?

Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1) The *Western Australian wild dog action plan 2016–2021* ended in June 2021. The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development is currently implementing the *Western Australia wild dog action plan 2021–25*.
- (2) Not applicable.

SCHOOLS — PRAYER ROOMS

424. Hon TJORN SIBMA to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Education:

I refer to prayer rooms within the public school system.

- (1) How many schools within the public school system have prayer rooms?
- (2) With respect to (1), which schools?
- (3) Does the Department of Education provide any policy guidance or practical support to school principals in respect of the safe operation of these prayer rooms—for example, are these rooms made available to students of all faith backgrounds; are they accessible to both sexes; and is supervised guidance or religious instruction provided?
- (4) If yes to (3), please table the above.
- (5) If no to (3), can the minister please explain the absence of such a policy or program of support?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

An answer cannot be provided in the time allocated. Therefore, I ask the member to put the question on notice.

FORMER SWAN DISTRICT HOSPITAL SITE

425. Hon DONNA FARAGHER to the minister representing the Minister for Lands:

I refer to the former Swan District Hospital site.

- (1) Can the minister advise whether the Department of Lands remains responsible for the overall management of this site?
- (2) If no to (1), which department or agency is responsible?
- (3) If yes to (1), how long is it intended that the department will retain overall management and ownership of the site?

Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The following response has been provided by the Minister for Lands.

- (1)–(3) The Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage is responsible for management of the site, which has been offered for inclusion in the Noongar land estate as part of commitments under the south west native title settlement, originally initiated by the former Barnett government. DPLH is working with the trustee for the Noongar Boodja Trust on the transfer of the site.

SOUTHERN SEAWATER DESALINATION PLANT

426. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Water:

I refer to my question without notice 379 asked on 7 May 2024 on the southern seawater desalination plant compliance in purchasing only renewable energy and to its Environmental Protection Authority approval obligation to purchase “carbon offset credits from accredited third parties” for non-renewable electricity purchases if the renewable only criteria could not be met.

- (1) For each of the financial years 2017–18 to 2022–23 inclusive, what was the cost of carbon offset credits from accredited third parties that were purchased specifically to meet this SSDP obligation?
- (2) In which of those financial years did the purchase of carbon offset credits not meet the required level, and for each of those years, what percentage of total energy purchases was the shortfall of carbon offset credits?

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question. The following answer has been provided to me by the Minister for Water.

- (1) No carbon offsets were purchased.
- (2) Not applicable.

GOVERNMENT FLEET — NUMBER OF VEHICLES

427. Hon NEIL THOMSON to the Minister for Finance:

- (1) How many cars are in the senior government vehicle fleet by agency?
- (2) How many cars are in the government vehicle fleet for the general government sector by agency?
- (3) What is the budgeted cost for SGVS vehicles for 2023–24?
- (4) What is the budgeted cost for GVS vehicles for 2023–24?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1)–(2) The Department of Finance does not categorise vehicles as per the question, so the total number of active fleet vehicles has been provided.

As the information is provided in tabular form, I seek leave to have it incorporated into *Hansard*.

[Leave granted for the following material to be incorporated.]

Agency	Total Active Fleet Size
Art Gallery of WA	1
Arts and Culture Trust	2
Auditor General (Office of)	11
Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (Department of)	695
Building and Construction Industry Training Board	6
Burswood Park Board (The)	2
Central Regional TAFE	34
Chemistry Centre (WA)	7
Commissioner of Main Roads	593
Communities (Department of)	957
Construction Industry LSL Payments Board	2
Corruption and Crime Commission	19
Economic Regulation Authority	4
Education (Department of)	445
Electoral Commission (WA)	3
Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety (Department of)	253
Finance (Department of)	66
Fire and Emergency Services (Department of)	239
Forest Products Commission	85
Fremantle Port Authority	50
Government Employees Superannuation Board (GESB)	5
Governor's Establishment	2
Health (WA) - Child and Adolescent Health Service	145
Health (WA) - Department of Health ©	34
Health (WA) - East Metropolitan Health Service	153
Health (WA) - Health Support Services	13
Health (WA) - North Metropolitan Health Service	324
Health (WA) - PathWest Laboratory Medicine WA	57
Health (WA) - South Metropolitan Health Service	257
Health (WA) - WA Country Health Service	962
Health and Disability Services Complaints Office	1
Industrial Relations Commission (Department of the Registrar, WA)	6
Inspector of Custodial Services (Office of the)	2
Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation (Department of)	29
Justice (Department of)	564
Land Authority (WA) (DevelopmentWA)	18
Land Information Authority (WA) (Landgate)	22
Legal Aid Commission of WA	27
Legislative Assembly (Department of)	2
Legislative Council (Department of)	2
Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (Department of)	45

Lotteries Commission	20
Meat Industry Authority (WA)	3
Mental Health Commission	20
Museum (WA)	11
North Metropolitan TAFE	33
North Regional TAFE	69
Parliamentary Comm'n for Administrative Investigations	4
Parliamentary Services Department	2
Planning, Lands and Heritage (Department of)	46
Police Force (WA)	1621
PoliceCov	85
Premier & Cabinet (Department of the)	73
Primary Industries and Regional Development (Department of)	438
Public Prosecutions (Office of the Director of)	35
Public Sector Commission	7
Public Transport Authority of WA	188
Salaries and Allowance Tribunal	1
Small Business Development Corporation	4
South Metropolitan TAFE	62
South Regional TAFE	45
Sports Centre Trust WA (Venues West)	14
State Library of WA	1
State Solicitor's Office	30
Training and Workforce Development (Department of)	20
Transport (Department of)	105
Treasury (Department of)	13
Treasury Corporation (WA)	1
Water and Environmental Regulation (Department of)	138
WorkCover WA Authority	5
Total	9238

(3)–(4) This figure is not held by the Department of Finance and is determined by individual agencies as per their budgets.

HOMELESSNESS — CENTRE FOR NATIONAL RESILIENCE — BULLSBROOK

428. Hon BEN DAWKINS to the Leader of the House representing the Premier:

I refer to the Bullsbrook Centre for National Resilience and the answer provided to my question without notice 367 on Tuesday, 7 May 2024.

- (1) Can the Premier confirm the Bullsbrook facility was made available during a recent bush fire emergency in November 2023?
- (2) What procedure was followed to activate the commonwealth government facility to make it available to people affected by the bushfire emergency referred to in (1)?
- (3) Can the Premier advise why the WA Labor government will not make any effort to make the Bullsbrook facility available to WA families with kids this winter as an alternative to living in tents and cars?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question.

- (1) Yes.
- (2) The facility was made available by the federal Department of Finance.
- (3) The Premier addressed this matter in answer to the member's question on Tuesday, 7 May.

FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES — WALPOLE FIRE

429. Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Environment:

I refer to question without notice 397 asked yesterday and the Minister for Emergency Services' response.

- (1) How long did it take to get aerial support to the fire?
- (2) Where did the waterbombers have to come from?
- (3) Why were there no waterbombers stationed in Albany or Manjimup?
- (4) If waterbombers were stationed in Albany or Manjimup on 25 April, why were they not immediately deployed at first light?
- (5) Why was the waterbomber contract for the south coast not extended given the extended dry summer drought and tinder box conditions we have been experiencing?

Hon DARREN WEST replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question. On behalf of the Minister for Environment I provide the following answer.

- (1) Aerial suppression aircraft were dispatched to the incident at 12.02 pm on 25 April 2024.
- (2) The aircraft were dispatched from Bunbury airport.
- (3) On 25 April 2024 three fixed-wing waterbombers were strategically located at Jandakot and three were based at Bunbury to provide suppression support across the south west.
- (4) See response to (3) above.
- (5) Contracted waterbombers at Albany and Manjimup had been extended beyond the term hire contract end date of 30 March 2024 and were subsequently released on 17 April 2024 following discussions and agreement between the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services.

SMARTRIDER UPGRADE PROJECT

430. Hon WILSON TUCKER to the minister representing the Minister for Transport:

I refer to the SmartRider upgrade project, originally announced in 2018.

- (1) What has been the total allocation of funds towards this project to date?
- (2) For those stations where new SmartRider validation machines have been rolled out —
 - (a) has the PTA surveyed customers; and, if so, what has been their feedback; and
 - (b) how have the new validation machines impacted upon traffic flows through validation gates?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The following answer has been provided to me by the Minister for Transport.

- (1)–(2) The Public Transport Authority engaged a pilot group of 150 customers for a six-week period to test the new validators and provide feedback. Additionally, non-pilot group customers were provided with a QR code option to also provide feedback. The feedback was generally positive, with 90 per cent finding the validators easy to use. The new fare gate validators have a different design and mounting, which has resulted in some minor delays as customers familiarise themselves with the new validators.

MEDICAL CANNABIS — USER CLUBS

431. Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Health:

I refer the minister to the opening of Australia's first cannabis club in Goodna, Queensland, a site that aims to provide medicinal cannabis users with a safe space to seek quality advice and friendship whilst improving their overall health.

- (1) When will the Cook government permit the operation of such a club here in Western Australia?
- (2) If the government is not inclined to permit access to such clubs, what issues and potential impediments would justify such a stance?

Hon PIERRE YANG replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The following has been provided by the Minister for Health.

- (1) For medicinal cannabis that is lawfully prescribed, dispensed and possessed by individual patients and/or health practitioners, under applicable laws in Western Australia, there is no regulatory impediment to a business providing a safe space for quality advice and friendship.
- (2) Not applicable.

TOM PRICE DISTRICT HOSPITAL — REDEVELOPMENT

432. Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Health:

I refer to the 57-year-old Tom Price Hospital and the government's announcement in February 2021 to replace it.

- (1) Given that the project definition planning phase was complete as of March 2023, what is the status of the contract award process?
- (2) What factors outside of cost escalation are delaying the project?
- (3) Has the Minister for Health received a letter from the Western Mine Workers Alliance voicing its concerns with the hospital?
- (4) Can the minister please table her response?

Hon PIERRE YANG replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The following answer has been provided by the Minister for Health.

- (1) WA Country Health Service, or WACHS, and the Department of Finance are working closely to progress the project as part of priority pipeline of health infrastructure needs across WA, with the project currently in the planning phase.
- (2) Current construction market conditions remain challenging, particularly in regional WA. WACHS remains committed to addressing critical infrastructure needs, managing ongoing maintenance requirements and ensuring value-for-money outcomes for the community.
- (3) Yes.
- (4) I table the attached letter and reply.

[See paper [3132](#).]

CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT AND FOREST PRODUCTS COMMISSION —
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**433. Hon LOUISE KINGSTON to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Environment:**

I refer to the memorandum of understanding between the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and the Forest Products Commission. Section 33(9) of the Conservation of Land Management Act section states —

A copy of a memorandum of understanding made under subsection (1)(bb) must be tabled in each House of Parliament not later than 14 sitting days of each House from the day on which that memorandum of understanding was executed.

When was the last MOU between DBCA and the FPC executed and tabled?

Hon DARREN WEST replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. I provide the following answer on behalf of the Minister for Environment.

The memorandum of understanding between the former Department of Conservation and Land Management and the Forest Products Commission for the performance of statutory functions and joint obligations with respect to the sustainable management of native forests, the management of public plantations and the harvesting of forest products and related matters was executed on 2 March 2001 and tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 26 June 2001 and in the Legislative Council on 19 June 2001.

TROY MERCANTI — BAIL APPLICATION

434. Hon NICK GOIRAN to the minister representing the Minister for Police:

I refer to reports that Magistrate Matthews granted a bail application to repeat offender Troy Mercanti that was opposed by WA Police and the response from the police commissioner that “we put our case forward as best as we could”.

- (1) Do the terms of his bail oblige him to reside at his mother's home, report to the Western Australia Police Force twice a week, pay a \$100 000 personal undertaking and stay at least 500 metres from the alleged victim, as has been reported?
- (2) Was it open to WA Police to submit that he be fitted with an ankle monitor, as has been suggested in reports?
- (3) If yes to (2), did WA Police do so?
- (4) If no to (3), would doing so have been the first time WA Police had made such a submission in response to a bail application?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The following answer has been provided to me by the Minister for Police.

The Western Australia Police Force advise that it is not possible to provide an answer within the required time frames. A response will be provided to the honourable member on Tuesday 14 May 2024.

BUILDER REGISTRATIONS**435. Hon STEVE MARTIN to the Minister for Commerce:**

I refer to the building industry.

- (1) How many builders are currently registered under each of the following registrations —
 - (a) practitioners;
 - (b) contractor (individual);
 - (c) contractor (partnership); and
 - (d) contractor (company)?
- (2) How many of the following applications were approved in the financial year 2022–23 —
 - (a) initial registration—practitioner;
 - (b) initial registration—individual (contractor);
 - (c) initial registration—partnership (contractor); and
 - (d) initial registration—company (contractor)?
- (3) The building and energy webpage on practitioner renewals apologises for delays in processing due to a high volume of building registration applications. What is the extent of these delays, and is the department adequately resourced to process registrations?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1) As at 7 May 2024, there were —
 - (a) 5 575;
 - (b) 2 041;
 - (c) 110; and
 - (d) 2 731.
- (2) The following initial registration applications were approved in the 2022–23 financial year —
 - (a) 290;
 - (b) 121;
 - (c) four; and
 - (d) 192.
- (3) The Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety aims to process at least 80 per cent of the applications within 50 business days. This time frame is dependent on the complexity and also the completeness of each application received. In April 2024, the average time to finalise a building practitioner renewal was 44 business days.

FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESPONSE TEAMS**436. Hon PETER COLLIER to the minister representing the Minister for Police:**

I refer to the \$7.7 million additional funding for the family and domestic violence response teams in the 2022–23 budget.

- (1) How much of the \$7.7 million has been spent to date?
- (2) How many additional staff have been employed as a result of this funding increase and what is their specific role?
- (3) How has the coordinated response service been extended; and, if it has not, why not?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for some notice of the question. The following answer has been provided to me by the Minister for Police.

- (1)–(3) The funding allocation that the honourable member is referencing in the 2022–23 budget was allocated to the Departments of Justice and Communities towards the enhanced family and domestic violence response team.

ANIMAL WELFARE ACT — REVIEW

437. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

I refer to the minister's response to question without notice number 46 asked on 15 February 2023 regarding the review of the Animal Welfare Act.

- (1) Has a consultation draft of the new animal welfare bill or amendment bill been completed?
- (2) If no to (1), why not; and, if yes to (2), when will the draft be released for public consultation?

Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1) No.
- (2) A consultation draft of the amendment bill is still under development.

BAYSWATER TRAIN STATION —
OFFICE OF MAJOR TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY REVIEW

438. Hon TJORN SIBMA to the minister representing the Minister for Transport:

I refer to the Office of Major Transport Infrastructure Delivery, or OMTID, and its usual contemporary project management practices in relation to the Bayswater train station project.

- (1) On how many occasions has OMTID reviewed, assessed, evaluated or similar the Bayswater train station project?
- (2) On which dates did the above work occur?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The following answer has been provided by the Minister for Transport.

- (1)–(2) I refer to the answer given to question without notice 344.

HEALTH — FIRST 1 000 DAYS FRAMEWORK SYMPOSIUM

439. Hon DONNA FARAGHER to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Health:

I refer to the First 1 000 Days Framework Symposium held on 29 April 2024.

- (1) Will the minister list all government and non-government organisations that attended this symposium?
- (2) When is the first 1 000 days framework expected to be completed?

Hon PIERRE YANG replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The following has been provided by the Minister for Health. The first question is answered in tabular form. I seek leave to incorporate it into *Hansard*.

[Leave granted for the following material to be incorporated.]

(1)

Government organisations	Commissioner for Children and Young People
	Department of Communities
	Department of Education
	Department of Health
	Child and Adolescent Health Service
	East Metropolitan Health Service
	North Metropolitan Health Service
	South Metropolitan Health Service
	Women's and Newborns Health Service
	WA Country Health Service
	Department of Premier and Cabinet
	Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries
	Non-government organisations
Ability WA	
Anglicare	
The Australian Childcare Alliance Western Australia	

Carewest
Derbal Yerrigan
Goodstart Early Learning
Kiind
Luma for her health and wellbeing
MercyCare
Minderoo Foundation
Ngala
Parenting Connection WA
Playgroup WA Inc.
Telethon Kids Institute
Wanslea
WA Council of Social Services

In addition, three consumers attended.

- (2) The framework will be completed in late 2024.

GRIFFIN COAL — LIQUIDATOR

440. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the minister representing the Minister for State and Industry Development, Jobs and Trade:

I refer to the answer to my question without notice 1018 of 13 September 2023 in which the minister advised the house —

It is the government’s intention to recover the funds provided to Griffin’s managers and receivers as part of any longer term commercial arrangements.

- (1) Has the government determined a time frame and financial recovery matrix applicable to “any longer term commercial arrangements” for the recovery of the unprecedented taxpayer grants to the insolvent Griffin Coal?
- (2) If no to (1), why not?
- (3) Will the astonishing payments of \$1.15 million to date or contracted to Ad Astra Corporate Advisory, KPMG and Sternship Advisers be recoverable as part of “any longer term commercial arrangements”; and, if not, why not?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The minister advises the following.

- (1)–(3) The commercial parties are responsible for developing viable commercial arrangements beyond June 2026. This process is ongoing. Should the commercial parties come to a longer term arrangement, the state will consider its options with respect to cost recovery.

ENVIRONMENTAL OFFSETS — EVALUATION

441. Hon NEIL THOMSON to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Environment:

I refer to the *Native vegetation policy for Western Australia: Implementation roadmap May 2022*.

- (1) Has Department of Water and Environmental Regulation finalised action 1.2, which commits to “a broad, strategic and economic evaluation of environmental offsets and use the outcomes to inform 1.3(b)”, which is to “Develop policy reform options to better incentivise conservation and restoration, support a net gain in native vegetation and build the restoration economy”?
- (2) If yes to (1), can the government table the evaluation?
- (3) If no to (1), when will the government finalise this given it was due to be completed in 2023?

Hon DARREN WEST replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. On behalf of the Minister for Environment, I provide the following answer.

- (1) Evaluation of environmental offsets is ongoing, as part of a package of broader environmental offsets reforms.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) Not applicable, noting that action 1.3(b) is due for completion in 2024.

ROAD SAFETY CAMERAS — DATA COLLECTION AND PROCESSING

442. Hon BEN DAWKINS to the Leader of the House representing the Minister Assisting the Minister for Transport:

I refer to new road safety cameras being considered by the Department of Transport for a widespread rollout.

- (1) Can the minister confirm that data harvested by the new multifunctional cameras will be processed by a United States-based company using artificial intelligence?
- (2) Can the minister confirm that the cameras and technology being considered are capable of recording data other than data relating to road safety?
- (3) Will the minister table the contractual details with the provider of the road safety camera technology that pertain to data privacy and security?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1)–(3) No contract has yet been awarded for the new multifunctional safety camera technology. The new safety camera technology will be approved under section 117(2) of the Road Traffic (Administration) Act 2008 by the Minister for Police and only used in ascertaining the occurrence of a road law-related act or omission that must be prescribed in the regulations.

HOUSING — PRECINCT PROJECTS —
JOONDALUP, BENTLEY, BEACONSFIELD AND CANNINGTON**443. Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT to the minister representing the Minister for Housing:**

In May 2018, the Western Australian government announced plans for four precinct projects in Joondalup, Bentley, Beaconsfield and Cannington, which together were expected to create 5 000 homes. The then Premier said the projects “represented WA’s biggest urban infill developments”. Six years has passed since this announcement.

- (1) How many, in total, of the planned 5 000 homes have been completed in each of these four precincts?
- (2) What is the development status of each precinct?
- (3) If known, how much has been spent on each of the precincts for master planning and site preparation?

Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The following response has been provided by the Minister for Housing.

- (1)–(3) The Cook government has invested a record-now \$3.2 billion in housing and homelessness measures since 2021 and will deliver nearly 5 000 social homes. Since 2021, more than 2 100 social homes have been delivered and a further 1 000 are under contract or construction. On average, around 125 social homes are added or returned to the system every month in Western Australia. The COVID-19 pandemic radically reshaped housing markets across Australia and particularly impacted the viability of high-density developments. As the member is aware, Bentley and Beaconsfield are currently undergoing further planning and the state government will make further announcements in due course.

FIREARMS — BUYBACK PROGRAM

444. Hon WILSON TUCKER to the minister representing the Minister for Police:

I refer to the joint media statement of the Premier and the Minister for Police, dated 14 February 2024, which states —

A payment schedule based on current retail baseline valuations, similar to those used in the 1996–97 Commonwealth buyback, has been developed in conjunction with industry stakeholders.

Can the minister advise the house of the exact similarities between the current buyback and the commonwealth buyback of 1996?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

The Western Australia Police Force advises that in both instances, legislation prohibited certain firearm ownership and the government chose to offer remuneration to all firearms owners to relinquish their firearms.

TRANS-AUSTRALIA RAILWAY — FLOODING

445. Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER to the minister representing the Minister for Transport:

I refer the minister to the recent closure, due to flooding, of the Trans-Australian Railway line, the second such forced closure in as many years, which left shelves bare across WA, and noting that our home is girt by sea, I ask the following question.

- (1) What alternative arrangements does the government have in place ahead of the next environmental event that washes the line away, to ensure that WA is not effectively cut off from the rest of the commonwealth?

- (2) Although it is many years since WA state shipping was closed down, why are our coastal sea lanes not being utilised as a potentially cost-efficient and timely backup?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1) Where required, Main Roads Heavy Vehicle Services can issue temporary special assistance access permits. These permits are made available to accredited transport operators to facilitate freight movements, often from interstate, when the usual freight supply chain will be interrupted for a prolonged period.

During previous flooding events, the permits allowed 53.5-metre-long road trains, under special conditions, to operate from the border to Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie. Main Roads WA is engaging with national and other jurisdiction counterparts to streamline the process to provide permits for longer, heavier vehicles to move freight via the road network. The state government continues to work with the commonwealth government and industry to identify infrastructure resilience improvement opportunities.

- (2) The WA government is working with the commonwealth government and industry on the establishment of a national strategic fleet of vessels, which will be available for requisition at short notice. The WA government has established a shipping policy unit in the Department of Transport, which is focused on developing and enabling capability to address the state's critical shipping needs, building on the recommendations of the WA shipping and supply chain taskforce.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT GRANT SCHEME

446. Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE to the Minister for Emergency Services:

I refer to capital grants provided pursuant to the local government grant scheme, and I ask the question in relation to the current financial year.

- (1) Were any grants provided to local government for gender-separate facilities?
 (2) If yes to (1), can the minister please provide the amount and details?
 (3) Were any grants provided to local government for post-incident hygiene facilities?
 (4) If yes to (3), can the minister please provide the amount and details?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

It was not possible to provide an answer in the time allotted. As such, I ask the honourable member to place the question on notice.

Hon Martin Aldridge: I asked three weeks ago.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: The member did not ask it.

BRIDGETOWN CAMP SCHOOL

447. Hon LOUISE KINGSTON to the Leader of the House representing Minister for Education:

I refer to the answer provided by the minister to question without notice 84 regarding the lease with Fairbridge for the management of the Bridgetown Camp School.

- (1) Were the expiring leases with Fairbridge renewed?
 (2) If no to (1), why not?
 (3) If the Bridgetown Camp School lease was renewed, was an agreement reached to bring the camp school back to operational status?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1) The expiring lease with Fairbridge Western Australia Incorporated for the Bridgetown Camp was not renewed.
 (2) The Department of Education has agreed to Fairbridge Western Australia Incorporated's request to not renew the lease for Bridgetown Camp School on the basis of low throughput.
 (3) Not applicable.

CHILDREN IN CARE — WHEREABOUTS UNKNOWN

448. Hon NICK GOIRAN to the minister representing the Minister for Child Protection:

I refer to the answer to my question without notice 298 on 16 April 2024.

- (1) Has the child reported as unaccountable for—not in contact been found?

- (2) For how many days was the whereabouts of the child unknown?
- (3) Has the Department of Communities reported the child to the Western Australia Police Force as a missing person?
- (4) How many children who are in the care of the CEO have their whereabouts currently recorded as —
 - (a) unaccounted for—in contact;
 - (b) unaccounted for—not in contact; and
 - (c) missing?

Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The following response has been provided by the Minister for Child Protection.

The Department of Communities advises that as of 8 May 2024 —

- (1) Yes.
- (2) It was 33 days.
- (3) Yes.
- (4)
 - (a) Three children;
 - (b) one child; and
 - (c) one child.

SCHOOLS — DEFIBRILLATORS

449. Hon STEVE MARTIN to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Education:

I refer to the Department of Education's instruction on 15 November 2023 requiring all schools to provide at least one automated external defibrillator to be located at each school's main administration building by 30 June 2024.

- (1) Were schools provided with an increase in their one-line budgets to cover the cost of the AEDs?
- (2) What is the cost of an approved AED required by schools?
- (3) Have any schools expressed concerns to the department about the extra cost of this provision?
- (4) Will funds be made available to schools to comply with this additional requirement that they would not have budgeted for?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1) No. Public schools already receive funding through their one-line budget to purchase and maintain first-aid equipment. The Department of Education did, however, offer budgetary support to any school that may be experiencing financial hardship as a result of this CEO instruction.
- (2) The cost of AEDs can vary, ranging from around \$1 800 to \$4 000. Public schools were not requested to purchase a particular type, only to ensure the defibrillator meets the Australian and New Zealand Standard AS/NZS 3200.2.4:2006 particular requirements for safety—cardiac defibrillators.
- (3) The Department of Education has received one formal application for financial assistance, which has been supported by the school budget review committee.
- (4) Budgetary support is available to public schools, through the Department of Education's student-centred funding model principal advisers; and, if required, additional financial assistance may be provided by the school budget review committee.

POLICE — FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

450. Hon PETER COLLIER to the minister representing the Minister for Police:

- (1) How many family and domestic violence incidents were attended in 2020–21, 2021–22 and 2022–23?
- (2) How many arrests were made in each year for the incidents referred to in (1)?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for some notice of the question.

The Western Australia Police Force advise that the answer to (1) is in tabular form. I seek leave to have the response incorporated into *Hansard*.

[Leave granted for the following material to be incorporated.]

(1)

Year	Number of incidents attended
2020–21	58,574
2021–22	55,927
2022–23	58,993

(2) The Western Australia Police Force is unable to provide a response as the number of arrests resulting from the above incidents cannot be determined in a reliable and systematic manner. Manual interrogation of each incident is required to ensure the family violence incidents attended on the police computer aided dispatch system are directly linked to the arrests recorded in the police incident management system.

There is a note —

1. Statistics are provisional and subject to revision.

COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM AND COMMUNITY CAPITAL WORKS FUNDS

451. Hon TJORN SIBMA to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests:

I refer to the community grants program and the community capital works funds administered by the Office of Multicultural Interests over the last four years.

- (1) Has or have any applications for funding by either program been rejected?
- (2) Has or have any applications not been funded to the full requested amount?
- (3) Has or have any groups received funding outside the parameters of either program?
- (4) If yes to (3), will the minister please provide details?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

An answer cannot be provided in the time allocated. An answer will be provided during the next sitting week on Wednesday, 15 May.

FIREARMS — BUYBACK PROGRAM FIREARMS — SERVICEWA APP

Questions without Notice 386 and 413 — Answer

HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Emergency Services) [5.03 pm]: I would like to provide answers to Hon Louise Kingston's question without notice 386 asked on Tuesday 7 May and question without notice 413 asked yesterday, which I seek leave to have incorporated into *Hansard*.

[Leave granted for the following material to be incorporated.]

Question without notice 386 —

As at 26 April 2024:

- (1) 9,730
- (2) \$3,617,841
- (3) No

Question without notice 413 —

Answer

The Western Australia Police Force advise:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) No.
- (3) The application is currently in development where the first phase has been completed. The second phase is on track for completion in early 2025. To date, approximately \$5 million has been expended for application development.

ELECTORAL AMENDMENT (FINANCE AND OTHER MATTERS) ACT

Question without Notice 392 — Answer

HON MATTHEW SWINBOURN (East Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary) [5.04 pm]: I would like to provide an answer to Hon Tjorn Sibma's question without notice 392, asked yesterday.

I seek leave to have the response incorporated into *Hansard*.

[Leave granted for the following material to be incorporated.]

- (1)–(3) The contractor engaged to assist with user experience consultation commenced on 2 April 2024. It is expected this role will cost \$44,000. The workshop sought to obtain feedback from existing users about their previous experience with political funding disclosures and in particular obstacles or challenges they have faced. This was then translated into what users would like to see in the new system in order to overcome those previous challenges. I table the attached information.
- (4)–(5) The WA Electoral Commission is intending to have the online disclosure system operational by 1 July with such functionality as required for users to comply with their obligations under the Electoral Act from 1 July 2024. Other functionality covering tasks users will be required to do during the election period (February–March 2025) will be delivered later in the year but well before users will require that functionality. The second phase of delivery will also allow user feedback from the initial few months of operational use to be incorporated into the next version. Version improvement is a standard process for any such system and will continue into the future.

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN: I note that a document is attached to the answer. That document is, essentially, illegible. I will table it and undertake to seek to provide the member with a legible version of the document.

[See paper [3133](#).]

HON SOPHIA MOERMOND — LEGALISE CANNABIS WA PARTY — RESIGNATION

Statement by President

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Alanna Clohesy) [5.04 pm]: Members, I have received the following correspondence dated 9 May 2024 from Hon Sophia Moermond —

Dear President

Please be advised that I am no longer a member of the Legalise Cannabis WA Party and intend from today to sit as an independent Member.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND PRIVILEGES

Seventy-first Report — Gendered language in the Joint Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly — Motion

Resumed from 18 October 2023 on the following motion moved by Hon Martin Aldridge —

That recommendations 1 and 2 contained in the seventy-first report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges, *Gendered language in the Joint Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly*, be agreed to.

HON MARTIN ALDRIDGE (Agricultural) [5.06 pm]: I will be brief because the report is brief, and I am sure that members will have had the opportunity to canvass it because it was presented to the Council by you, President, in October 2023 with two recommendations to amend: firstly, the joint standing rules and orders of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly and, secondly, the Legislative Council prayer. One might interpret from the report title that, as is usually the case, this is about addressing a gender bias towards men. Indeed, several of the instances contained in the report relate to a gender bias towards women, and that relates to the reign of Elizabeth II from 1952 to 2022 and a reference to “Her Majesty” as opposed to “His Majesty”, as we now have King Charles III.

Members will see from the report that, over time, Parliament has addressed gendered language in our standing orders, but this is a matter that is a little more complex because it relates to the joint standing rules and orders of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly and, therefore, we are required to have the concurrence of the Legislative Assembly. Members will see appended to the back of the report correspondence received from the Procedure and Privileges Committee of the other place inviting us to send a message to the Legislative Assembly.

Members will also know that, over time, we have addressed this issue through amendments to legislation by addressing gendered language in the statute book. The Minister for Emergency Services might recall that not long ago we dealt with the Firearms Amendment Bill 2021 in which the government sought to introduce the term “warehouseman” into the Firearms Act. I offered to correct the gendered language at the time, but that offer was declined by the government, so it will be interesting to see, Hon Louise Kingston, when we get to the Firearms Bill 2024, potentially next week, whether that issue has been taken up and addressed in the next firearms reform.

It is interesting for members to note that the prayer is not contained in our standing orders. It is not a schedule to our standing orders. It is effectively a document that is adopted by resolution of the Council and amended from time to time. In recent times—indeed, I think it was in the last Parliament—the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges looked at the form of our prayer.

Hon Nick Goiran: It was in 2015.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: It was in 2015, so it would have been two Parliaments ago. I think it was on a motion of Hon Dr Sally Talbot that the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges considered the form of our prayer. It is also important to recognise that in practice, the prayer has already been amended by the President, with reference to “His Majesty”. The resolution found in recommendation 2 will mean that the words “Her Majesty” currently referred to in the adopted prayer will be deleted and substituted with the words “the Sovereign”.

Members will see in the report that the Legislative Assembly invited us to send it a message by 9 November 2023, or it could initiate the process by sending us a message. To my knowledge, we have not received such a message from the Assembly, so it is timely that, on 9 May, with members' agreement, we send a message to the Assembly, at least with respect to recommendation 1, making those amendments that will futureproof the standing rules and orders of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly by adopting gender-neutral language in our standing orders. I commend the recommendations of the report to the Council.

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House) [5.10 pm]: I thank the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges for doing this entirely sensible piece of work and indicate that the government will support it.

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition) [5.10 pm]: Likewise, the opposition understands the reasons for the proposed changes. We thank the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges for the work that it has done, and we will support the recommendation.

Question put and passed.

GRAHAM SCOTT — TRIBUTE

Statement

HON DAN CADDY (North Metropolitan) [5.11 pm]: It was prophetic that Hon Steve Martin said earlier today during debate that he would be happy to talk about the great South Fremantle teams of the past. He and I are both Bulldogs tragics. I barely missed a South Fremantle game as a teenager. We did not always get out to Bassendean, but we never missed a home game. The “we” I am referring to is my paternal grandmother, Ann Caddy, and me.

My grandmother and I spent hours on the concrete terrace of the prison wing at Fremantle Oval. Indeed, as a learner driver, I did a fair bit of my learning to drive going down the coast to Fremantle Oval. It was, therefore, with immense sadness that I learned this week of the passing of former South Fremantle great Graham Scott on the last day of April of this year.

Graham was a premierships-winning forward. He was part of the South Fremantle premierships team of 1970. He had an incredible career at the Bulldogs, playing 117 West Australian Football League games for the team between 1966 and 1971, and kicking 301 goals, including four goals in the aforementioned 1970 premierships victory over Perth. He then took his talents to Victoria, where he played 26 Victorian Football League games, including 18 games for 14 goals with St Kilda, and eight games for four goals with Melbourne. Scott also represented Western Australia on four occasions, kicking four goals. In total, throughout his 147-game career, he booted 323 goals, with an average of 2.25 a game.

I give my heartfelt condolences to Kane and the rest of the Scott family, his friends, teammates and the broader South Fremantle Football Club community.

Vale, Graham Scott.

STATE BUDGET

Statement

HON SHELLEY PAYNE (Agricultural) [5.13 pm]: I commend our female Deputy Premier; Treasurer, Hon Rita Saffioti, on her first budget and her good economic management. I also mention her contribution to and all she has done for the transport network in Western Australia, including our first Western Australian-manufactured railcars.

BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES REGISTRATION AMENDMENT (SEX OR GENDER CHANGES) BILL 2024

Receipt and First Reading

Bill received from the Assembly; and, on motion by **Hon Matthew Swinbourn (Parliamentary Secretary)**, read a first time.

Second Reading

HON MATTHEW SWINBOURN (East Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary) [5.14 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment (Sex or Gender Changes) Bill 2024 will repeal the Gender Reassignment Act 2000, abolish the Gender Reassignment Board, amend the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1998, and make consequential amendments to other acts to create a new, streamlined administrative process for sex and gender recognition in Western Australia. Western Australia and New South Wales are the only Australian jurisdictions that require applicants to have undergone medical or surgical reassignment in order to change the sex on their birth certificate. All other states and territories have reformed their processes regarding the registration of a person's sex or gender. Western Australia is the only jurisdiction in which a board determines a person's application to change sex. In all other Australian jurisdictions, applications are administered by the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. Through this reform, the Cook Labor government upholds an important

value: that everyone deserves the respect and dignity of being recognised as themselves and having their legal identity align with their lived identity. These reforms will mean that trans and gender-diverse members of our community will no longer be required to undergo medical or surgical reassignment if they want to change their gender on their birth certificate. Significantly, this bill will implement a commitment taken to the 2017 state election to abolish the Gender Reassignment Board and will ensure that all trans and gender-diverse people have proper access to official identity documents that match their lived identities.

In January 2018, the Attorney General asked the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia to report on issues and inconsistencies in WA's legal framework relating to the recognition of sex and gender. In the final report, tabled in December 2018, the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia recommended abolishing the board and introducing a new administrative application process for people seeking to change their sex or gender on their birth certificate. Over 500 written submissions were received by the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia, the majority of which supported the abolition of the Gender Reassignment Board. Although many people have had a positive experience with the board, others have found the process difficult, archaic and onerous, and view the role of the board as unnecessary gatekeeping. In December 2022, the government committed to repealing the Gender Reassignment Act 2000 and the Gender Reassignment Regulations 2001, abolishing the board and introducing a modern administrative process to change sex or gender to be implemented through the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. This commitment is now being delivered through the introduction of the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment (Sex or Gender Changes) Bill 2024.

The bill will strike a balanced approach between providing ease of access to those who wish to change their sex or gender on their birth certificate and ensuring appropriate safeguards and thresholds, particularly for children. With the abolishment of the Gender Reassignment Board, the reforms in the bill will be a significant leap forward for gender recognition in Western Australia and represent a key step towards a more respectful and inclusive approach to gender diversity in our state.

I will now take the house through the key reform features of the bill.

The bill will insert proposed part 5A into the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1998. Division 2 of proposed part 5A will provide an administrative process to change a person's sex or gender in the registration of the person's birth. It is important to note that the reform will not change the existing procedures that relate to the registration of sex when a child is born. The reforms will enable a person to apply to the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages to change the registration of sex or gender. Sex or gender classifications will be specified in the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Regulations 1999. This approach is similar to those in South Australia and the Northern Territory, where reforms were introduced in 2016 and 2018 respectively. I advise at the outset that the sex or gender classifications that the Attorney General intends to prescribe in the regulations will be male, female and non-binary. In addition, the government intends to undertake further consultation with intersex community advocates in relation to the inclusion of an intermediate intersex descriptor. These descriptors will be available for a change to a person's sex or gender under the process introduced by the bill and not available when a child is born.

The classifications proposed for WA are largely consistent with those available in South Australia and the Northern Territory. The commonwealth government has also offered non-binary, indeterminate and intersex options on an Australian passport since 2011. Under the new process for WA, applications will be made directly to the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages by adults—that is, persons 18 years and over. The reforms will remove the requirement for surgical or medical reassignment and bring WA broadly into line with most Australian jurisdictions.

Under the new process, applications for a change of sex or gender must be supported by a statement by a doctor or psychologist certifying that the person has received appropriate clinical treatment regarding the person's sex or gender. The evidence requirements largely reflect those in place for applications for an Australian passport. Since 2011, a person has been able to apply for an Australian passport in their preferred gender by providing a statement from a registered medical practitioner or psychologist confirming the person's gender.

Applications for children will understandably involve a few more steps and appropriate safeguards. Applications for children aged 12 years and over must be made by both parents or guardians and must be accompanied by a statement from the child consenting to the change. In addition, the supporting statement from a doctor or psychologist must certify that the child has received appropriate clinical treatment in relation to the person's sex or gender and that the child understands the meaning and implications of the application.

When making an application for a child, each parent or guardian must believe the child's sex or gender to be the sex or gender specified in the application. For cases in which both parents or guardians do not support the change in sex or gender, or when the child is applying with no parental support, a pathway for applications will be provided through the Family Court of Western Australia. All applications for children under 12 years of age must be considered by the Family Court. The bill also contains provisions to expressly allow the CEO (Children and Community Services) to make an application when a protection order is in force in respect of a child. The provision will ensure that consideration is given to the role of the parents before an application is made.

People who were born outside of Australia will be able to access a formal document that acknowledges their sex or gender. Currently, recognition certificates issued by the Gender Reassignment Board are available to adults and children who have been resident in WA for at least 12 months. To ensure continued access to a formal recognition of sex or gender, division 3 of proposed part 5A of the bill provides for the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages to issue a document acknowledging a person's sex or gender. The availability of an acknowledgement document is significant for people who live in Western Australia but are not able to amend their birth certificate in their country of birth.

To apply for an acknowledgement document, a person must have been born outside of Australia and have lived in WA for at least 12 consecutive months immediately prior to the application being made. The application process and evidence requirements for adults and children for an acknowledgement document will be the same as the process for a person born in WA applying to change their registration of sex or gender. This will include approval by the Family Court, under certain circumstances, for applications for an acknowledgement document for children. People born in other Australian states and territories will continue to have access to change of sex or gender processes in their birth state or territory.

Division 4 of proposed part 5A will provide restrictions on changes of registration of sex or gender and the issuing of acknowledgement documents. The first type of restriction is based on frequency of change. A person will not be able to change their sex or gender in the registration of their birth or obtain an acknowledgement document more than once in a 12-month period or more than three times in their lifetime. Changes made before the person reached the age of 18 will not be counted for the purposes of these restrictions. These restrictions are consistent with the existing position for changes of name.

The second type of restriction relates to certain classes of offenders, such as prisoners and supervised offenders, who will be restricted from changing their sex or gender without first obtaining the approval of the relevant supervisory authority. Reportable offenders under the Community Protection (Offender Reporting) Act 2004 who change their sex or gender, or are issued with an acknowledgement document, will be required to report this change to the Commissioner of Police within seven days.

The bill provides for commencement on proclamation. This will allow time to draft the necessary subsidiary legislation and to develop and implement the supporting administrative arrangements across multiple agencies that will be required. Implementation of the reforms is a priority, and it is expected that the new processes will commence approximately six months after the passage of the bill.

In introducing this reform, the Cook Labor government acknowledges the tireless efforts of the individuals and organisations who have advocated for advancing equality for all, regardless of their sexual or gender identity. The government looks forward to engaging further with the trans and gender-diverse community in implementing the reform to ensure it delivers on reducing barriers to accessing identity documents.

The bill strongly supports the government's recent commitment to WA's first LGBTQIA+ inclusion strategy, which will promote inclusiveness and wellbeing to ensure LGBTQIA+ people experience full social and economic participation and recognition.

Pursuant to standing order 126(1), I advise that this bill is not a uniform legislation bill. It does not ratify or give effect to an intergovernmental or multilateral agreement to which the government of the state is a party; nor does this bill, by reason of its subject matter, introduce a uniform scheme or uniform laws throughout the commonwealth.

I commend the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment (Sex or Gender Changes) Bill 2024 to the house, and I table the explanatory memorandum.

[See paper [3134](#).]

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

House adjourned at 5.25 pm
